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THE

PERILS OF FASHION.

"Il aimait à conter ce qu'il avait vu; et très souvent son imagination lui offrait, plus que sa mémoire ne lui fournissait."—MÉMOIRES DU CARDINAL DE RETZ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
COLBURN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1852.

249. x. 210

LONDON
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.



PERILS OF FASHION.

CHAPTER I.

"J'ai du bien, je suis jeune, et sors d'une maison
Qui se peut dire noble avec quelque raison;
Et je crois, par le rang que me donne ma race,
Qu'il est fort peu d'emplois dont je ne sois en passe...
Je suis assez adroit; j'ai bon air, bonne mine,
Les dents belles surtout, et la taille fort fine.
Quant à se mettre bien, je crois, sans me flatter,
Qu'on seroit mal venu de me le disputer.
Je me vois dans l'estime autant qu'on y puisse être,
Fort aimé du beau sexe, et bien auprès du maitre."

MOLIÈRE.

PHILIP LEVERTON was the only son of Viscount Leverton, at the distant period at which this history commences, a Colonel in

the Guards, Lord of the Bedchamber to George III., and a gay and handsome widower. The son reaped from that paternity, all the advantages it had been capable of dispensing; a first-rate education, consisting, in the Viscount's opinion, of a series of gentlemanly and accomplished private tutors, much foreign travel, and influential introduction into the best circles, and a post in the Foreign Office, which brought £800 a year to his privy purse.

As regarded finance, this was all that Lord Leverton could do for his son: for during the sixty years his life had run, his best endeavours seemed to have been used to dispense his own patrimony. Well had he succeeded; and with the exception of £1000 a year, secured as a dowry on all the Lady Levertons, past and to come, and only to be enjoyed by the Viscounts in default of Viscountesses, his income consisted merely of a Colonel's pay, and the salary appertaining to his appointment in the household.

The young Philip had been early taught that he must make his own fortune. This performance was generally executed by those in his position of life, by stringing together as many sinecures as could be obtained, under a ministry who used them as freely, as we, in these days, do mendicity tickets, consolidating these little advantages by a rich marriage. But Philip Leverton's bent lay not that way. True to the superficial character of his education, and to the perfect notions it had given him of enjoyment, and the means of attaining it, he loved better to linger among the brilliant crowds at Devonshire House, and the dissipated circles of certain Whig coteries, than press towards any opening to fortune. And, as for marriage with any but the most exquisite and idolized of the beauties who then flourished, his whole blood curdled at the bare idea; with a tincture of romance in his disposition, he courted rather the dangers and difficulties which attended the love-making to the wives

of others, than safely and soberly seeking the hand of some wealthy spinster for himself.

Though they rarely met, enough of his son's irregularities and wasted opportunities reached the Viscount's ear, to make him at length consider that a removal from England was desirable. He set about in right earnest to effect it; and by dint of some little courting and much manœuvring, the post of *attaché* to our Embassy at the Court of St. Petersburg was offered to his son. It squared exactly with young Leverton's wishes at the time; not only by enabling him to break off with a good grace some loves which were becoming embarrassing, but also because it would enable him better to economize his Foreign Office pay, which, in those gentlemanly days of official liberality, he retained, though serving elsewhere.

Furnished with strong letters of recommendation to all of weight or fashion, Philip set out for the city of the Czar; an event

which proved a curious epoch in his life. Contrary to all bygone experiences, he had resided but a short time in the Imperial capital, when he found that he was actually a person of consequence; a character his best London friends would never have thought of ascribing to him. However, a certain diplomatic capacity, and an intimate knowledge of the continental languages, put him as much above the ordinary rank of blundering and idle *attachés* in his official position, as did his great *savoir faire* in all the prettinesses of life, in the palaces of the proud, but then barbarous Muscovites. The consequences were, that he would have led an infinitely more dissipated life at St. Petersburg than he did in London, but that his intelligence and influence rendered him eligible for undertaking one or two delicate missions. These for a time removed him from the capital; and not only proved lucrative, but gave him a name in some few of the European *corps diplomatiques*.

Leverton had been about two years absent from England, when, owing to his personal credit in the Imperial Cabinet, he was requested to undertake a special and secret mission to the south of Russia; in which, as an Englishman, it was thought that his services would be more efficient, while also proving to the resident minister that no underhand dealings were contemplated, adverse to the interests of the British Government.

Winter, with its retinue of clouds and snow-storms, was still reigning on the banks of the Neva, when he commenced his long and dreary journey; but the dominion of spring had already asserted itself, ere the *attaché* had reached the more genial south.

On the banks of the River Kuban lies the little village of Mechastovskoy. Of scanty limits, and with its few habitations embosomed among the oak-trees that surround it, it is still, from its position on the river, an important military post, favourable to the constant look-

out which the Cossacks of the Black Sea are obliged to keep on their troublesome neighbours, the Circassians. The evening that Leverton entered the little village was a moment favourable for the setting off of its quiet attractions. The steppes spread afar to the right, like a verdant ocean, whose equality was only interrupted by the tumuli, that here and there rise on its surface. On the left flowed the rapid river, its broken banks adorned with oaks and willow-trees, while the wild raspberry, and several blooming shrubs, gave an appearance of richness most agreeable to the eye, fatigued by the perpetual monotony of the plains. Beyond the marshes, on the Circassian side of the Kuban, the whole craggy and lofty ridge of the Caucasian mountains met the view, tinged with a rosy radiance by the setting sun.

Seated beneath the shade of a dwarf oak, on a turf fragrant with aromatic herbs, in his enjoyment of the view before him, Leverton

forgot to marvel at the length of time which elapsed, ere his carriage and horses followed him from the hut, where the Cossack conductor had stayed for an hour's repose. The day had been unusually sultry, and there was a silence in the air, an absence of all human sound, which seemed to tell of the lassitude left by toil beneath a glowing sky, when even the cooler hours of evening bring not the villagers to their usual gathering and merriment. This was the more remarkable, as in other villages through which his route had lain, the intended campaign against the Circassians had given a bustle of war, a "note of preparation," not to be mistaken. But here all was still. No heart's laugh—no low murmur of rustic gossipry met the ear; and in this quiet, so near the habitations of man, there would have been something mournful, but for the gay aspect of the groves around, the refreshing sound of the swift-flowing waters of the Kuban, the busy hum of innumerable insects, and the shrill

neighing of some beautiful horses, tethered here and there on the plain beyond.

Suddenly the half doze in which the traveller was indulging was interrupted by the appearance near him of a young girl of a loveliness of so mournful and touching a character, it seemed to place a stronger spell on the feelings than did the regularity of her features, and extraordinary symmetry of her form. She was evidently not a Cossack female ; as, instead of the Indian handkerchief folded like a turban, which usually formed their head-dress, she wore the little embroidered *calotte* of the Greek women, at the back of her head, from which fell two long braids of dark and silky hair. A noble and elevated forehead, delicately arched eyebrows, a straight nose, gently curving nostrils, a short upper lip, slightly unclosed from the full crimson one beneath, all spoke of that land where Phidias had found and immortalized his models. Besides these proofs of her origin, the Cossack tunic was replaced by the short jacket worn

by the Greek islanders; a variously tinted sash with fringed ends encircled her slender waist; while little embroidered slippers betrayed a slight and fairy ankle; a charm, or possibly the absence of it, which the Cossack damsels usually hid beneath a yellow boot.

Concealed by the low branches of the oak, Leverton remained in silent observation of the Greek. She had paused in the path she had chosen, and stood listening with unclosed lips. At length the light and irregular steps of a horse were heard approaching, and a young Cossack chief leading a slight and bounding steed over the irregularities of the path, suddenly stood before her. There was much of beauty and manly vigour in the young warrior; but there was also a pallid cheek and troubled brow; and Leverton observed, that with a suddenly averted gaze and a compressed lip, he seemed bent on passing the Greek without noticing her, until with a proud and graceful movement she motioned him to stop. He

obeyed her sign, and with a glance of intense earnestness seemed to await her will. There was a moment's pause; until, at length, in the simple dialect of the country, she said:

"Leave me not as you now leave me: for my sake—for your own sake, stay."

A gleam of hope flashed in his eyes; and he said hastily: "On one condition, Ione."

"And that is?" she asked.

"That you never see him more."

"Impossible!" ejaculated the Greek.

"Then we part for ever," was the reply, and he passed on.

The poor girl turned to retrace her steps, and thus her countenance was hidden from further observation; but the Cossack gazed after her with looks of mingled love, rage, sorrow, and reproach. There was also a slight expression of uncertainty; but it was of short duration; and springing to the back of his curvetting steed, he passed in an instant out of sight.

This was evidently rather a serious love quarrel; and the Quixotic idea presented itself to the mind of the *attaché*, that a third person might possibly effect a reconciliation between these two good-looking people; however, the approach of his carriage drove all his chivalry away: and recollecting that the important despatches he was conveying were not to be delayed, he stepped into his *calèche*, trusting that the love feud would subside, as those things usually do.

As the carriage proceeded, Leverton again overtook the Tchernomoski,—as the Cossacks of the Euxine are sometimes called,—who, mounted on his beautiful courser, and habited in the picturesque costume of his tribe, was a most striking figure, even to one fresh from St. Petersburg, at that time the very depot for fancy dresses. His vest was of embroidered blue cloth, his breast was covered with gold chains, and a silken sash, bound round his waist, sustained pistols of curious workmanship;

while from the powder flask, which hung from one of the chains, a variety of coins and trinkets were suspended. A Turkish sabre hung from his side, in a sheath richly embossed with gold. His boots were of yellow leather; and a cap of fine black Tahtarian wool, costly only from its material, was the plainest part of this theatrical costume. He was evidently equipped for war; and, as Leverton guessed, formed one of the band which each village was to furnish for the expedition against the Circassians—an expedition which the despatches of the *attaché* were, however, designed to delay, if not entirely set aside.

The Cossack scarcely noticed the carriage, though for some little time they pursued the same route. He seemed absorbed in deep and passionate reflections, betrayed by his worn, yet expressive countenance, which, with the excessive beauty of his features, was now completely shewn, from his having taken the heavy Tahtarian cap from his head. Leverton then

perceived that distinctive mark of the Tchernomoski, the braided lock. This singular characteristic grows from the crown of the head, and passes behind the right ear. It is worn openly by the Cossack peasant, but is partly concealed by those of a higher grade, by the clustering curls of their dark hair, though all wear it with a sort of religious veneration. In times past, a Tchernomoski would rather have parted with life itself, than with this badge of the tribe to which they belong, and which distinguishes the Cossack of the Black Sea from every other in the Russian empire.

The quiescent mood in which the young chief had for some time ridden, now suddenly forsook him, and vehemently spurring the beautiful creature which bore him, he set off at full speed, appearing to occupy himself in a series of warlike exercises. Leverton was in intent observation of him, and so must have been the driver, who clumsily enough managed to overturn the carriage in a grip in the road,

which his wandering vision had not perceived. This put all Greeks and Cossacks at once out of the *attaché's* thoughts; and with a broken wheel and sprained wrist he re-entered Mechastovskoy, just two hours after he had left it.

The dirty hut where the horses had previously rested, proved the only hostelry in the village, and it was too late to seek a private residence—the usual resource of travellers in these remote districts; but fatigue, and an aching limb, cured him of much superfinery, and after sending off a Cossack courier with the despatches, which it was necessary should reach Taganrog, without the delay which the broken carriage would occasion, and solacing his arm with a fomentation of warm water, Leverton sought repose in the only room which could be allotted him. However, a night's rest on the dirty sheep-skins offered for a bed, produced no brilliant results, and he awoke feverish and unrefreshed.

Sending to the carriage for his medicine

chest, he administered to himself a saline draught, and was not a little amused by the astonishment which a savage-looking female, half hostess, half *cantonnière*, exhibited at the magical effervescence produced by the admixture. Probably a rumour of the wonders of this compound, or the scientific appearance of the medicine chest, spread in the village; for about an hour afterwards, a man was introduced into Leverton's room, who, coming from the commandant of the small fort attached to the village, begged his assistance, and that of his medicine chest, to alleviate the condition of a captive Circassian, who there lay dying.

Leverton obeyed the summons. On his passage to the fort, he learnt that the sufferer for whom his services were required, had been taken prisoner some days before, in a desperate encounter with a band of brave Cossacks. It appeared that there was much anxiety to preserve this person's life; for, being a chief of high rank, he was so far a commendable offering

to the Imperial Government, and the general then in command of the Kuban district had intimated to all the fortresses the value of such living trophies.

On arriving at the fort, Leverton was ushered into a low arched room, of which the small grated window gave token of its being a prison: in every other particular it had much the appearance of being a very damp cellar. However, the small grated aperture did all the regulation work of prison windows in pictorial representations, that is, it kept the principal part of the room in obscurity, throwing a bright stream of light on the captive and those around him.

Leverton's taste and habits had taken him much where the best specimens of humanity flourished; but never in all the courtly scenes, where he had assisted, had he ever seen such surpassing beauty as the form of the suffering Circassian now presented to him. We are told that the beasts of the field look with peculiar reverence on the human form; and it was with

something of what one might fancy their impressions, that he regarded the captive chief. He learnt, for the first time, to comprehend the full force of the hacknied expression, "the human form divine." There it was before him: there, in the air of command given by the lofty brow—there, in the deep meaning of those still, yet lustrous eyes—there, in the expression of power given by the muscular throat, the wide chest—in the majesty which symmetry of feature, and mildness of countenance always lend. Besides all this, there was that something which the English are so prone to talk about and call, "the air of a gentleman." It is a strange expression uttered in connection with that glorious Circassian; and yet the courteous inclination of the head as he first perceived the *attaché*—the gentle, yet princely movement with his hand, which signed to the man beside him to give place, was a condensation of that nameless charm usually ascribed to high breeding, and the habitude of courtly society. His

age was apparently fifty, but that amount of years had taken nothing from the perfection of his person. Michael Angelo might have dreamt of such when he pourtrayed his Moses. It was, in fact, the aspiring semblance of a God, but, alas!—at the same time—a suffering, dying mortal.

They had recently extracted the iron point of a lance from the side of the Circassian. The hemorrhage had been but slight, but it was evident that fever was running high, and that death was near. On entering, Leverton had observed a female form kneeling at the side of the rudely-supported plank which served for a couch to the dying warrior; but her back was towards him, and he only remarked that she was occasionally moistening the burning brow of the sufferer; while, with a green bough, she waved away the flies which the close atmosphere of the dungeon seemed to have collected.

Leverton took his hand, and in Russian

uttered some few words of comfort. He replied in the same tongue, though imperfectly. He complained of intense thirst; and the saline draughts, which were in truth the *cheval de bataille* of the medicine chest, seemed most desirable. Leverton turned to the young woman who held the bough, to ask for a cup of water, in which he might administer the draught, when to his surprise he recognised the Greek girl. She received his directions with eagerness; and a faint gleam of satisfaction shone over her sad countenance, when, pressing her hand within his own, the Circassian appeared to express a sense of relief in the cooling influence of the febrifuge. Leverton's next care was to procure a better apartment. It was easily effected. His acquaintance with the General then at Taganrog, and his diplomatic position, besides the real anxiety of the Commandant to save the life of the Circassian, gave his wishes weight; and the dying man was removed to a cool upper apartment, furnished

with all the comforts which could be hastily collected—the *attaché's* carriage-cushions forming a principal feature.

Thanks to the extraordinary bungling of the wheelwright of Mechastovskoy, there was no likelihood of Leverton being able to proceed on his mission that day; so towards evening he paid another visit to the fort. There was some little amelioration in the sufferings of the Circassian; and as night drew on, Ione, who was still in attendance, proposed that all others should be dismissed, herself being left to watch the couch of the sufferer.

"What alone, Ione?" Leverton asked.

"It will be his happiness—it will be my happiness," was the reply.

"The deuce it will," thought the *attaché*, "the poor Tchernomoski had some cause for wrath it seems." He told Ione that he too would share her watch, it being possible that a favourable crisis might intervene, which by care might be improved. She kissed his hands,

and pressed them to her brow. It was a graceful and expressive action, and made Leverton rather inclined to wish she had never seen either the Circassian or Cossack. But the night-watch was agreed upon; and the Greek girl and the English diplomatist prepared for the vigil.

An opiate, administered successfully, after a time had its effect on the Circassian; and assured by his deep breathing of his slumbers, his nurses withdrew to a distant window, from whence the broad May moon, shining on the swiftly-flowing waters of the Kuban, offered a striking spectacle. It was a moment to call for confidence. Leverton asked it; and all that had been exciting his curiosity for the last twenty-four hours was imparted to him in the most enchanting style. Leaning against the stone embrasure of the windows,—the moonbeams resting full on her lovely brow,—soothed by the interest shewn in her, Ione seemed to live back her past life, and to call the prettiest

expressions to describe it. It was a story of strange vicissitudes.

Her father, an aged Greek, had been driven by the rapacity of a Turkish Pacha from the fair island of Ipsara, and deprived of his small patrimony. He had fled with his only daughter to Russia, to seek the protection of a brother-in-law, who held a trifling post under the Imperial Government. Death had surprised him in the village of Mechastovskoy, through which their route lay. Affrighted and heart-broken, the desolate Ione knew not where to seek protection; but a Cossack, high in the military service of the Emperor, took her to his home, his wife shewing her all the affection of a sister. After a time, his young brother sought her in marriage, and their troths were plighted. A sudden and unforeseen catastrophe seemed to extinguish every hope of their union. During the absence of part of the little garrison, the fort of Mechastovskoy was suddenly stormed by a band of Circassians, apprised by some

means of their diminished force. Many of the brave defenders of the fort were slain by the assailants—the first protector of Ione among the number; her affianced lover was one of those who were absent. With an excess of rapine not often practised by the Circassians, not content with carrying off all the arms and ammunition they could collect, they bore away with them the poor Greek girl. This was an extremity of aggression to be explained, perhaps, by the circumstance of the young girl having in her excessive terror fled to a spot actually to be passed in the victorious retreat of the spoilers; but so it was.

Conveyed with gentleness to the dwelling of the chief, who had headed the assault on the Russian fort, Ione conceived the hope, that he who ruled as a king over all those surrounding him, yet watched like a father over their welfare, would still restore her to her lover and adopted home. However, six months passed in the dwelling of the Prince Zabalkan,—as

Ione persisted in calling the chief—shewed her the futility of her expectations. She learnt that the policy of the Circassians never permitted the departure of any one, who had once dwelt a captive within their mountain fastnesses; a rigour and caution extending even to women and children. The knowledge plunged her into deep dejection.

With the tenderness of a young girl who would soothe the wild dove she has caught, the Chieftan's wife omitted no care to lure the Greek from her sorrow. At first all was vain. The captive had no other solace than that of constantly praying to a little golden crucifix she always carried in her bosom. By degrees however a calm, like happiness, came over her; and though she still at times cast a tearful glance towards the far North, she began to feel an interest in all around her, executing with animation the light offices assigned to her. A new trial awaited her.

The wife of the Prince Zabalkan, whose

health had long been failing, now sunk in death-shewing sickness. Ione watched her as a sister, and prayed for her soul's saving, as a saint. Her prayers awakened curiosity in the dying Mahomedan; her words conveyed the indefeasible points of her faith; and the Circassian's last breath ascribed glory to the One glorified. Though bereaved by death of the wife of his bosom, the stern ruler of his tribe still sought the society of the Greek captive, and led her to talk of the hopes she had given to the dying. A bold thought rose in the mind of Ione. Was the Prince by her means to be turned to the truth? It became the one absorbing hope of her being.

Time went on, and Ione at length learnt that the heart of Zabalkan was in her keeping. How mysterious are the springs of love in a woman's soul! The loss of her affianced husband had long ceased to be wept, and yet the love of one godlike in beauty, and princely in mind, was all unresponded to by the young girl.

Affection—woman's heart affection rested on both; but the fount of love in that pure bosom was yet unstirred. The Circassian found that it was so, and besought her earnestly to banish what had just passed entirely from her mind, and that it might not be reverted to until a year had passed.

During that year a treacherous and desperate attack of a combined Cossack force, on the fortress of Zabalkan, intervened. The Tchernomoski were victorious. The Greek girl was rescued; and the Circassian chief, covered with innumerable wounds, was taken, after a fearful contest, which ended only after the almost entire destruction of his own band. On learning the capture of Zabalkan, to the astonishment of the Cossack and his sister-in-law, Ione insisted on visiting his prison. They witnessed the meeting, and saw her clinging to him, uttering the sweetest words of sorrow and affection; words that seemed to render the captive all but happy.

That evening the Cossack sought an interview with the Greek girl alone. He was cold and composed; but he told her that the horrible belief had come over him, that the best blood of the Tchernomoski had been perilled for the contented favorite of a Circassian harem. There was but one step which would assure him that his suspicions were unfounded, and that she still felt the love she had plighted in former days. It was, to become his wife on the morrow, and accompany him to Taganrog, whither military business, connected with the late attack on the Circassians, called him.

An icy "no," was all she could utter, and they parted without one word of concession on either side. Not to renounce her own resolves, but to make him better understand the feelings which actuated her in regard to the dying Zabalkan, had led to the interview which Leverton had witnessed. He beheld too the failure of her wish of reconciliation.

On the conclusion of her long narrative,

Ione had stolen softly to the side of the Circassian; and ever and anon she cast looks full of hope, to the sympathizing Leverton, who felt, as she did, that the long duration of this still slumber promised much. Day had already dawned, and the flowing waters of the river sparkled beneath the slanting sunbeams, before the sleep of Zabalkan left him. But it was with a scream and a convulsive start that he awoke. Ione in an instant was full of watchful cares; but he put aside the refreshment she was offering him with a gentle hand, saying with a sad smile:

"This is all useless, my blessed bird; I must leave you. Death is fast creeping over me. This kind doctor will tell you the same truth."

The Honourable Philip Leverton, *attaché* to the English Embassy at the Court of all the Russias, with many significant et ceteras, resented not this slight mistake of his calling. He saw this splendid wreck of human might

and beauty was rapidly sinking, and felt that the first medical talent could not save him. Zabalkan asked Ione for her crucifix. He attempted to hold it to his lips, but his hands failed in their office. Ione fulfilled his wishes, and still held it before him, as in the simplest words he made profession of his faith. Leverton listened with interest. Ione bowed her head and prayed. On again raising it, a piercing scream broke from her lips. Zabalkan was dead!

At noon that day, with a *calèche* well repaired, but with a heart much upset by the sad scenes he had witnessed, Leverton pursued his way to Taganrog and Azoo. Again immersed in the affairs which had led to this forced march from the capital to the most southern point of the empire, he, by degrees, lost the acute remembrance of the deep sorrow in which he had left the poor Greek girl; while the idea took possession of him, that, probably, by the intervention of the sister-in-law, the

impetuous Cossack might yet be reconciled to the unhappy Ione. The notion did not quite please him. He thought the young fellow had shown good feeling, but still he was not quite the *futur* he would have chosen for the gentle Greek.

In about six weeks, Leverton prepared to leave the shores of the Black Sea; and by making a detour of some few versts, he managed to direct his route through Mechastovskoy. It was tempting his fate; and the vivid emotion he experienced as he approached the village, ought to have warned him to have turned his horses precisely in the contrary direction. Prudence, however, was a word not in the Leverton vocabulary. He had to hear a sad story. About a month back the young Cossack had returned to Mechastovskoy to die. A wound received in his last encounter with the Circassians, together with t he agitation of mind which he had suffered, had produced fever, which had done its deadly work.

In his search for Ione, the *attaché* was directed to the little cemetery of the village, where her two brave friends were laid. The narrow enclosure was marked by a few black crosses, one or two cypresses, and some straggling shrubs of a finer nature; evidently the first fruits of sorrow, and now suffered to run wild by the consoled mourner. The Greek was kneeling between two mounds, apparently the final resting-places of the two beings with whom fate had so strangely associated her. Her hands were clasped as if in prayer; but there was a distraction in her full dark eyes, fixed, though they were on vacancy, an expression of woe and trouble on her pale forehead, a lassitude and weariness in her whole attitude, which betrayed that the solace of prayer at that moment was denied her.

It would take long to tell how the mourning Greek girl was translated from the Cossack burying ground to an elegant house in the Newski perspective, the residence of an English

merchant, settled at St. Petersburg: it must suffice then to say that Philip Leverton arranged it all with diplomatic propriety. It had required not much force of argument for him to convince himself that it would have been an act of unparalleled barbarity to have left the mourning Ione, desolate and forgotten at Mechastovskoy; but no little stretch of eloquence was necessary to induce the worthy Mr. Cayley to receive the Greek into his family. The merchant saw that it would be charity; but he also saw much of imprudence in the step. He was, however, over-ruled by his wife and daughters; who, besides the pure benevolence which actuated them, were not sorry to oblige one so influential at the British Embassy.

It must be confessed, that on the first glimpse of the surpassing beauty of the Greek, Mr. Cayley was a little startled, and much disposed to doubt the philanthropy which had dictated the resolution of Leverton to find, and restore her to her friends at Ipsara. Still the

energy with which this was undertaken rather reassured him; and when a fortnight had passed, and the *attaché* had made no attempt to see Ione, he began to hope that her welfare was alone the end proposed. This delusion on the part of Mr. Cayley was less to be wondered at, when we find that Leverton himself shared in it. The truth is, that when acting upon the impulse given by a vividly awakened admiration, and highly wrought feelings of compassion, he had compassed the removal of Ione from the scene of her grief and desolation, he had rather evaded sifting too minutely what his own ultimate views might be.

The fact of her arrival at St. Petersburg under protection he had provided for her, to a home he had secured for her, for the time startled him. He could no longer recal the feelings of romance which circumstances had called forth; and on now looking calmly on his actions, they assumed the character of egregious folly, or of rascality of rather a deeper tint than he could

quietly contemplate. The interregnum of a few weeks had slightly effaced the impression made by the interesting Greek; and the plans concocted in a romantic village on the Kuban, bore a very different face when viewed in the cafés and ball-rooms of a capital. Their completion frightened him; and this panic made him all the more energetically take measures for her restoration to her Greek connections, while it kept him from seeking her presence.

However, it became at length necessary that he should see her, to procure some precise instructions as to the whereabout of the Lusingieri family in former years. He did see her. She was radiant with joy at again beholding him; full of the most endearing and artless gratitude; and with beauty far eclipsing that which even in sorrow and trepidation had so dazzled him. The meeting was eventful. In two months from that time, the destitute Greek left the chapel of the British Embassy, the Honourable Mrs. Philip Leverton. It was a

strange irregularity in the unities of her life's drama; but to her it all arrived gradually, and therefore naturally. It was not so with the bridegroom. He had shattered prejudices, thrown off parental subjection, and rather marred worldly prospects to call the loving creature his wife. This had cast a cloud over his bridal; but it was confined to his own horizon.

CHAPTER II.

"Are there no ties to keep the heart,
A vow'd and sacred thing?"

LANDON.

A RUMOUR of mischief had reached Viscount Leverton's ears. Again using his interest with the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Philip was recalled; while the son of his steward was sent post haste to save the *attaché* from the folly and ruin of a *mésalliance*. The recal arrived at the very moment when Leverton was devoutly wishing to get from the monotony of the Russian

capital, and to have the power of shewing the beautiful Ione in London. It had travelled quicker than Mr. Jedediah Leverton Dark, who reached St. Petersburg on the very day that the pair, whom he had been dispatched to separate, had left it in the fondest unity; and Leverton arrived in London without the least suspicion that his father's influence had effected his recal, or that he had had any motive for desiring it.

The introduction of Ione to the Viscount was rather a flat affair. He uttered no reproach. His habits of courtesy would have made that difficult; and as filial obedience, honouring parents, and such trite things, had never been impressed on the mind of Philip, it would have been extremely inconsistent to have uttered tragic speeches on his failure in these points. However, his Lordship felt that his son had done a very bad thing for himself, and his looks shewed it; and though recognizing to its extremest point the extra-

ordinary loveliness of Ione, he forbore to utter one eulogium; if the half-articulated ejaculation: "She's a devilish deal too handsome ever to get a place about Court," may not be so construed.

Ione felt nothing of this coldness. The deportment of the old to the young in all semi-barbarous countries is ever distant, particularly towards females. The demeanour, therefore, of Lord Leverton did not appear to her unusual, and she made her graceful reverences with earnestness and respect; and sitting deferentially aloof, felt satisfied during the whole interview. Not so her husband. His father's coldness almost chafed him into anger. He thought Ione by far too humble in her bearing; and translating it into an evidence of the servility of low-breeding, rather than as the attribute of unsophisticated and Eastern womanhood, he shortened the audience, and returned to his lodging with something of that feeling which a man may

experience, who, after having bid high, and secured what he thinks a Titian, is shewn by some discerning friend irrefragable proofs of its being a copy.

This was the first revulsion in his belief of the perfection of Ione. Others soon followed. The truth is, that on the banks of the Kuban and Neva, Leverton had judged for himself, and looked on all the rare loveliness of the Greek with his own eyes. In London the force of old habits again supervened. There were connoisseurs in beauty to whose opinions he deferred; and he now regarded her only through the medium of all the eye-glasses of all the rakes, to whom he had previously conceived he should be an object of envy. He had deceived himself. Ione excited no sensation; and a chorus singer from La Scala, with half her attractions, would have had double her success, with those to whom her husband had presented her. There were many reasons for this. First, her beauty was of that classical,

high wrought character, that required a certain refinement to appreciate; secondly, to avoid singularity, she had begged to be allowed to adopt the English fashions, at that period most unbecoming; thirdly, there was not a spice of coquetry in the heart or manners of the pure-minded girl.

Sharing the fate of all those who seek by their possessions to astonish their neighbours rather than their own individual contentment, Leverton at length learned to think less enthusiastically of his wife, and to fear he had sacrificed too much for her possession. His love was still hers; that is, that sort of love which a man who has loved and lived for nothing but *colifichets* all his life, might be supposed to give her. But he began to feel his position as a Benedict irksome; and it was therefore with no small satisfaction that he accepted the offer of Lord Leverton, of a small cottage which he possessed close to one of the gates of Windsor

Park, and which might well be appropriated to the residence of his wife.

Ione rejoiced much at the change. London afforded little to elicit her sympathies; and though she saw less of her dear "Fillipo" at Park Cottage, still when he came he was then all her own.

True to the habitudes of the people with whom she had hitherto passed her days, the feelings of Ione had experienced no revulsion, when finding in London how little of her husband's time was spent in her society; and there was a sweet contentment in her disposition which made her find happiness even in the smoky back drawing-room of their lodging in Park Street; while, instead of conceiving as her right the occasional drives he took her in a phaeton, as high as the car of Juggernaut, she esteemed them an indulgence provided by his affection, and was all smiles and animation on the occasion. Neither did she remonstrate

when he announced his almost daily intention of dining from home. So far she was the wife suited to him—so far she was the wife suited to every man who could appreciate the exquisite gentleness and docility of her character. Europeans, however, are accustomed to look for something further; and will bear even railing and opposition from their wives, in consideration of the true and disinterested council they occasionally receive from them. It is said that, "every man who has a cultivated and high-minded wife, has in fact two selves, each holding watch and ward for the other." This may be so; but it is still a question whether what the wife gains in importance in this mixed government, is not lost in happiness. After all, it is not impossible but that the unconsulted denizen of the harem, who passes her days in stringing pearls and sorting sugar-plumbs, may have a better time of it than that most singular of *factotums*, an English wife.

In addition to the grateful and tender affec-

tion which Ione felt for her husband—a pure and abiding flame neither to be heightened or reduced—she had only two passions, the one religion, the other a love of flowers. Her religion was almost peculiar to herself. It was something higher than instinct, something lower than inspiration; but still, dwelling more in the spirit than the understanding. The sacred writings were but little known to her, and perhaps as little comprehended; still, that little afforded sufficient light to teach her, that implicit obedience to the dictates of supreme wisdom, joined to that worship of love which a God of love demanded, was required by them. She fulfilled the requirement with the zeal of an apostle, and in her simplicity neither looked for temples nor priesthood. Her knowledge of flowers was in like manner incommensurate with her love of them; and she delighted equally in the wild honeysuckle gathered from the hedge-row, as in the most expensive exotic with which her husband's gallantry might fur-

nish her. The pleasure afforded by her garden was unfailing; and she would deck her rooms or her hair with its spoils with epicurean excess. There were some little drawbacks to her floral pleasures, it is true; the hares from the Park nibbled her finest carnations. She had watched the little creatures from her window at early sunrise; but had little guessed to what devastation all their pretty skippings on the dewy grass had been the prelude. However, the gardener enlightened her as to the fact; adding the suggestion, that some fine plums and pears, which had lately disappeared from the trees, had doubtless been the prey of the same "mischeevus creeturs." Leverton laughed so heartily at hearing this history, that she questioned his commiseration, until some wire net arrived from town, which he had sent to protect at least her parterres from the hares.

With the exception of the occasional visits of her husband, the Greek lived in perfect solitude. Her simplicity and ignorance of the world were

thus scarcely lessened, even while years passed on, and her knowledge of English still remained imperfect. This gave an appearance of childishness, and a peculiarity to her manner, which, although it amused Leverton, and the few bachelor friends who at times accompanied him to Park Cottage, rendered the line of demarcation between herself and the outer world less easy to be overstept. However, none attempted to invade her retreat. The circumstance of the cottage not having always been so unexceptionably tenanted, had taught people to look slightingly on its occupants; and a beautiful woman and a foreigner—in those days a wonder—never seen beyond the boundary of her own domain, and visited by none but gentlemen, even though bearing the name of Leverton, was sufficient to quell the sociable impulses of the most enterprising of her neighbours.

The death of the Viscount, about three years after her marriage, made no difference in the position of Ione. Her gardener called her my

lady; and though his wife, who was her abigail and housekeeper, gave rather broad hints that the "own maid" of a real "my lady" ought to have higher wages, Ione scarcely understood her drift; and, as Mrs. Martin remarked to the cook, did not seem to know much about what the quality should do.

But, although the young Viscountess felt no change in her position in life, and after a pious prayer for the beatification of her frigid father-in-law, thought less of the coronet, that now might be said to deck her brow, than of any opening blossom in her garden; with her husband it was different. Inheriting little from his father, except huge chests of parchments of every description, regarding the raising of money by every contrivance known to lawyers, stewards, and spendthrift landowners, the dowry that then reverted to Ione as Viscountess came most opportunely. Any other property would have been appropriated by his own numerous creditors; but this was so secured, that the income

arising from the estate, held in trust, could only be paid to her signature.

Leverton, for the first time, felt that his marriage had not been altogether so desperate a thing as a good many of his associates, masculine and feminine, had ventured to assure him it was. He had a pleasure, too, in telling Ione how completely she now paid the debt of gratitude, to which she so constantly reverted. She could not clearly understand how she who possessed not an obole, was the means of assuring a thousand pounds a year to her husband; but she saw that something agreeable had happened to him; and she kissed his forehead, and hoped none of the frowns which had of late darkened it would appear again.

Poor Ione!—if one infinitisimal part of the causes for disquietude which oppressed her husband could have been made known to her, what heart's grief it would have been! It may be guessed, by the simple truth being told, that of a profligate set he was most profligate; but we

will not guess it. The dark deeds of *un homme déréglé* have nothing to do with our story.

How strange is the influence vested in that innocence, which in some is not only the result of innate purity, but of actual ignorance of evil. Who would ruffle the crystal of the tranquil lake? who defile the spotless bosom of the cygnet? who sully the chaste ears of a wedded wife with words of corruption? Leverton was at least guiltless of that crime. His forbearance in that particular was not without its reward. During the ten years of their wedded life, Ione never, in thought or word, ascribed to him aught of evil; and, to her last day, never fully understood the dark cloud which hung over his dying hour.

One fine morning the valet of the Viscount arrived suddenly to announce to her, that his master had been rather dangerously wounded by a pistol shot, received in a duel with a Colonel Barry, who had challenged him in consequence of finding Mademoiselle Celimène's

poodle-dog, Mufti, in the Viscount's chambers at the Albany. This was not told to her all at once, but by dint of questioning, she gradually elicited it. With consternation, Ione prepared to set off in the carriage, which her husband, who wished her presence, had sent for her, heart-broken at the idea of his suffering, but seeing nothing further in the transaction, than that the Viscount had been unjustly accused of dog stealing. When reaching the bedside of the Viscount, the same innocence of thought saved her much discomfort. She found a beautiful woman in his apartment, at one minute shrieking and casting herself on the ground in tragical attitudes, and then violently clasping the suffering man to her bosom, calling down vengeance on the head of Colonel Barry and the dog Mufti.

Ione believed that she saw in all this compunctions at having made a false accusation; but she felt relieved when the Viscount ordered his valet to lead the exhausted Celimène from

the room. Ione was now left alone with her husband and the doctor, who, to judge from his looks, was in no little apprehension. But the Viscount heeded not his prayers that he would keep himself tranquil. He drew Ione fondly towards him, saying in a low, tremulous voice: "You must teach me as you taught that noble Circassian,"—and died.

There could be scarcely found one less fitted to undergo the pressure of business and worldly matter, which usually crowd on the first weeks of widowhood, than she, whom a husband's death had left in such utter friendliness. But, others guessing this, all was done for her; and Ione returned to Park Cottage to weep and to pray, unconscious that aught else might be required of her, until, at the expiration of two months, Mr. Dark, the man of business of the Leverton family, in a letter requested the honour of an interview.

"Mr. J. Leverton Dark, Linden Grove," as his card shewed him, was the only son of

Jedediah Dark, the steward of the late Viscount's father. Some fifty years back they had begun life together,—the steward inhabiting the Brook Farm, which stood close to the park gates of Leverton Court, whose lawns and woodlands spreading far and wide, were the admiration of the whole country. Brook Farm still stands, but with all its hot houses, pineries, billiard, pavilions and archery grounds, is known as Linden Grove. Leverton Court also stands, but is transformed into an establishment for the cold water cure; while its beautiful park, shorn of all its splendid timber, is devoted to strictly utilitarian purposes. A trifling circumstance which took place in that same park, in a measure, illustrates the influence which worked all this.

At the *fête* given on the occasion of the young Viscount's coming of age, among the various proceedings then and there enacted for the better marking the auspicious event, which, relieving him from the thraldom of guardians, left him

in full possession of his ample fortune, was the lanting a fine little sapling oak in a fair open glade, which, in after years, it was meant to adorn, while it commemorated the majority of the brave young heir. A merry band presided over the ceremony. The hole was dug, the carefully prepared soil thrown lightly over the roots, and shaken among them, a stout willow stake stuck by its side, to which a twisted hayband tied it for support. A slight rail, to defend it from cattle, was hastily constructed, and completed the arrangements. Then wine was drawn—*Libabant pocula Bacchi*—toasts were drank, and glad cheering crowned the whole; and the party rushed off to some other scene of merriment, leaving the young patrician of the forest to thrive and flourish under the bright sunlight and fattening showers of fair oak-growing England.

A year passed. Some promising shoots on the young oak were visible; wax-like in tex-

ture, and of crimson tint; while the summer leaves showed fresh and green. The willow stake, too, which had been cut from a living tree, had made some shoots; long and unsightly, but still adorned with the pale, narrow leaf of its kind. The root which it had taken was all unseen; but evidently its hardy nature had drawn sustenance from the choice *nourriture* prepared for the oak, and the mere stake had become a living tree. The hay-band was still there. The willow was still servitor to the oak.

Another year. The shoots made by the sapling oak are ripened into twigs; one only had sprung fresh this summer; and a transverse branch of the willow,—mark, the stake had already made branches,—just touched it, and by friction, caused by the wind, had destroyed it. The hay-band had dropped. Burst by the increased girth of the willow, it lay rotting on the ground. The stake no longer supported—it was *neighbour* to the oak!

Another year. Alas! poor oak. Scarcely has it pushed forth a leaf to flutter in the summer breeze. There was some unfair play here—something in the hidden operations of the roots. Those branches, rank and strong though they be, do not yet shut out all light and air from the declining patrician which the stake was chosen to cherish. There is yet time to save the sapling; but who has observed the gradual work of extinction? The old shepherd, who occasionally leads his flock to that part of the park, and some others, may probably remark that the willow-stake is too much for the young lord's little oak; but the under-ground rumour goes no further.

Another year. What is that which now catches the first glad beams of the rising sun? A fair young willow tree! Oh! bad willow! And there, too, stands with a few brown leaves of the past year—not one green gift of the present — thy perished nursling! A stunted memento of what thy stewardship hath been.

The fence around thee, is also gone, and thou standeth forth in all thy coarse and common nature. Thou art even become a rendezvous of the cattle which stray about the park; and the red hair clinging to thy bark, which even now sets up for some little maturity, shows intimacy and undignified association. Again a year. The oak is gone. There is a stake mending a gap at some distance from where it stood. It is the young oak. Oaks have good hearts, which bear up for a time, even when torn from the earth which should nourish them.

This sylvan episode — this oak-and-willow tragedy of Leverton Park, is exactly coincident with the proceedings of the Viscount and Jedediah Dark, his steward; and of many other young heritors and such wily men of business. The heir spends more money than he can afford. The steward makes more money than he acknowledges. He begins to lend to his employer on his own terms. The securities are all in his own hands; and here begins the steward's para-

dise. The hay-bard is rent in twain. The steward—now the landed proprietor—for he has dared to show forth his prosperity—now lends to his friend. Still the same reckless expenditure goes on. And now the broad lands of the heritor pass away to meet the pressure from without. The steward no longer looks on them as securities for money lent—he is their purchaser. Years glide on. The spendthrift disappears from the goodly position in which Providence had placed him. The steward stands forth a country gentleman.

Here is the broad outline of a story, for the truth of which, however it may vary in detail, every day's experience may vouch. It need not be assumed that peculation is always employed. But there is a certain tact in turning the opulence which surrounds them to their advantage, that however it may square with the consciences of stewards in general, tells against them individually; while it accounts for the superabundant

growth of the *willow-stakes* now encumbering the land.

In the case of Jedediah Dark, there had been little squeamishness shown in reaping the harvest good luck had prepared for him. Brought up in a country attorney's office, where high and honourable feeling is not always at its best showing, he at once became fitted for the practical duties of his situation, and entirely awake to the advantages it offered. Perhaps there was never a prodigal heir lent himself so kindly to the plucking; but certain it is, that the impoverishing of the Viscount Leverton, and the enriching the steward, took less time than is usually required for such fluctuation. The strangest thing was, the perfect amity which subsisted between them.

The Viscount stood sponsor for the only son of the money-getting steward, who certainly had left no stone unturned to supply the necessities of his Patron. Death had settled both their

destinies within a few years. The one leaving that splendid mockery to his son,—sundry deeds and parchments, showing the enormous wealth enjoyed by former Lord Levertons. The other, at his departure, trying to think that the honour and glory of bequeathing £100,000 to his heir, indemnified him for sundry twitchings of conscience, which made his dying pillow a stone.

The son, who still condescended to be considered the man of business for the Leverton family, seeing that it might have been inconvenient to submit their parchments to other agents, now waited on the widow, to learn her wishes as to the future.

CHAPTER III.

"Moi, je ne vois rien de si beau que de hanter les grands seigneurs; il n'y a qu'honneur et civilité avec eux; et je voudrois qu'il m'eût coûté deux doigts de la main, et être né comte ou marquis."

MOLIÈRE.

ALTHOUGH there had been doubts as to the strict legality of the marriage of Ione, Mr. Dark had learnt enough, on his visit to St. Petersburg, to establish that point. Still he prepared for the interview with the widow, in the expectation of meeting something of the genus of a ballet-dancer, or a Turkish Odalisque. The

pure and unsophisticated manners of the Viscountess were, therefore, a surprise to him. They were more; but the son of Jedediah Dark had early learnt to hide fantastic and pronounced feelings, and his only bearing now, was that of the friendly and matter-of-fact man of business. To Ione it was inexpressible comfort to find that there was one in this wide world to care for her; and the very talking of such home affairs, as bank notes, receipts, and unpaid butchers' bills, established a closer confidence between herself and Mr. Dark, than had ever drawn her to the late Viscount, who had scouted as most unseemly, all such mundane topics of discourse; and she, whose heart had sunk at her first interview with the stranger, learnt to look for his visits as a reason for gladness.

In truth, the interposition of some competent person was decidedly requisite just at this time; and though a lawyer from the next country town might have acted for her, the widow did not

know that; and was no little startled to find, by the very long and numerous bills constantly pouring in upon her, that her expenses for the last few years had never been defrayed by the Viscount. Her first impulse was, of course, to pay them, until shown by Mr. Dark that that would be a means of involving her in difficulty. But how could she continue to live in a place, where honest men suffered through her means? The embarrassment was spared her. Park Cottage with its furniture was seized by other creditors of the Viscount.

At this moment, Mr. Dark begged she would consider his house as her home; where his mother, who presided, would vie with him in making her happy. We are told that the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb; but no lamb could have ever found more opportune shelter, than did the widowed Ione. To Mr. Dark her visit was a guarantee for the realization of his best, though secret hopes; and when at times he saw her graceful figure moving among the

bright parterres, or lingering to gaze with child-like earnestness on the gold and silver fish in the marble fountain, he was almost tempted to proclaim at once what those hopes were. However, policy forbade a step so premature. He was a timid man; and with him, as with many others, timidity proved a good substitute for wisdom.

Though by position and possessions able to write Esquire after his name, without getting laughed at for the assumption, and leading to all outward seeming the life of a gentleman, early associations threw a damp on his aspirations to that distinction; and Mr. Dark ever felt it a character to be enacted rather than realised. And yet, with this woful sense of inferiority, there was the constant craving to be among the high and mighty of the land. The difficulty made him reflect bitterly on the mistaken ideas, as he conceived them, of his father; who had rather chosen to let his riches yield

him distinction among those of his own grade, than give him a lift into one superior.

With these limited and old-fashioned notions of the uses of wealth, it is not to be wondered at, that the steward had sent his son to a second-rate school near London, with boys of the same money-getting parents; and where the greater number of plumcakes sent to him, and a shilling a week pocket money, gave him a proud ascendancy. He was next articled to a lawyer in London, not so much for the purpose of making the law a profession, as to give him a sufficient knowledge of its technicalities to enable him "to keep his own," as the elder Dark expressed it. For in the event of an heir rising to the Leverton family with common sense and some knowledge of figures, there were some little transactions which might be viewed in a different light to that, in which the old lord and his son, with patrician ignorance of the nature of property, had regarded them.

In this lawyer's family young Dark had acquired a certain knowledge of high life; at least that degree of it which was then to be acquired from frequenting the pit at the opera-house, and the park on Sundays. He knew the names and faces of all those arrogating to themselves the nature of stars in the galaxy of fashion, and he employed the same trades-people; but still felt, to his great discomfort, incontestibly excluded from their sphere, though it was his tantalising pleasure to study without ceasing their movements and manners. On his father's death, though inheriting so ample a fortune, he still more felt the difficulty which it is to take up the position of an English gentleman, without having served his apprenticeship in early youth. It may be, that certain recollections, connected with his father's rise into affluence, might have a little contributed to the coldness with which his efforts at good neighbourhood had been met by the country families around him. Be that as it may, he

found himself a very great man with an inferior class, whose daughters also looked complacently on the wealthy and handsome bachelor; but beyond securing his vote, or his assistance in any public object, he felt that all others stood aloof.

At this period, he became acquainted with the widowed Viscountess, and a new current opened for all his thoughts and feelings. To obtain her for his wife became the one great end, to which a variety of devious paths were meant to lead him. In her beauty, excessive gracefulness, and peculiar simplicity of manner, he fancied he saw indisputable proofs of high breeding—points which must strike others as himself—and he knew enough of the world to guess that there were those who would court the Viscountess Leverton, even with an untitled husband. As a preliminary step, and one of the devices by which he sought to enhance his position in the world, Dark made application at the Herald's Office for the purpose of ascertain-

ing whether any dormant coat of arms could be revived as suitable to the Dark family. The answer was unfavourable. No one of the name of Dark had ever borne any heraldic badge. After an infinitude of inquiry and research on the subject, he was about to give it up in despair, and had tendered an extra fee to the official, who had conducted the affair, when the high-named functionary, probably aroused by his liberality, suggested that it was possible the base monosyllable Dark might be a corruption from some better name. The whole thing was put on a new footing; the results of which were the adoption of the name of D'Arc, with a shield of faultless emblazonment, both name and shield being supposed to have originated in the fifteenth century, through an ancestor, who fought against the inspired Joan.

All things now seemed to smile on the steward's heir. Touched by his unremitting kindness, and loving and gentle to all created things, it was not to be expected that Ione

could refuse his ardently proffered suit. She became his wife; and what is more, and which speaks largely on the advantage of not being too fastidious, uttered thanksgivings that so perfect a being should be awarded to her demerits.

The new Mr. D'Arc knew too much of the unyielding neighbourhood of Linden Grove, to expect that he should be received with more cordiality than heretofore; and so, as Coriolanus did to impertinent people before him, he "banished" them; and selling the grove and all thereunto belonging, he made the purchase of a fine old place in Sussex, which with its moat and gable ends seemed a fitting habitation for the representative of all the D'Arcs. If a house could make a gentleman, this was decidedly the one to work that desideratum.

Lady Leverton entered into all the wishes of her husband with the sweetness and self-forgetfulness which had marked her every step through life; and when Mr. Leverton D'Arc, as he stipulated on being called, beheld her receiving

those of their new neighbourhood, who first called upon them with graceful tranquillity, and yet with cordiality, he felt that the suffrage which his possessions and appearance of wealth had failed to command, must be awarded to the fascinations of the Viscountess.

Of all the undertakings entered into by the self-doomed Sisyphusses of modern times, there is none to compare to the enterprise of endeavouring to *veneer* themselves, as it were, into the very hard grain of an aristocratic circle of county people, when their own birth and station are against them. There is a regular system of repulse kept up, a *noli me tangere* spirit adopted by all, and as if by general accord. It is like a manœuvre ascribed to the cattle on the Swiss mountains when attacked by wolves, who are said to form a compact circle, by which means all their rears are protected, while, with noses lowered to the ground, an outward *chevaux de frize* of horns is presented to the enemy. Horns as impassable, though invisible,

were now presented to the new occupants of the Moated House. It however happened that some, untrue to the system, had stolen out of the phalanx, lured by the renown of Mr. D'Arc's cook, and Lady Leverton's beauty; and at the return dinners they occasionally met some of the self-instituted magnates of the land. But Mr. D'Arc, with the sensibility that a long experience of rebuffs awakens, felt that the encounter was almost always visited on the Amphytrion of the day; while every vigilance was used, and a "prepare to guard" manner kept up, to stop anything that might lead to further acquaintance.

The same experience which led the steward's son to detect the symptoms of keeping aloof in those whom he wished to propitiate, had also blunted the fine edge of his feelings; but like others, who have but one end in view, looking more to the advance they make than their failure, he numbered with satisfaction the acquaintance which a few years of adroit pushing—the mak-

ing himself useful—and a wilful blindness to slights, had acquired for him. Yet with all this, with a prodigal expenditure, and entertainments not to be eclipsed in splendour, he was still the interloper, the self-presented, the tolerated rather than the sought. But though he bore all with patience, though he figuratively turned his left cheek to those who had smitten his right, particularly if the smiter was, what he considered an all-privileged thing, "a Lord;" though with unremitting zeal in the cause, he worked up to the most exclusive of the great people around him,—he could not help feeling and wondering at that repelling power, which, better grounded than Canute's dominion over the tides, could say to him, "Thus far shal thou come, and no further," and actually keep him at the desired distance.

To account for the slowness of his advancement, Mr. D'Arc always referred to the lowness

of his birth; but even here there was an inconsistency which puzzled him. For while the prejudices of caste seemed inveterate as regarded himself, to others of still more decided *villenage* he saw attentions and preference shown. He had yet to learn that the wealth by which he sought to establish a link between himself and "the grandees," as he called them, was in fact the barrier between them. There are certain classes in England, who with piety, high education, and full of the sweet charities of life with those of their own rank, or with others immeasurably below them, shrink into impertinent and unamiable stone when brought into contact with those eclipsing them in wealth and splendid living, though of inferior birth. It is a curious pride, but as much the characteristic of "Old England" as its coal-smoke, and saddlery; so words shall not gainsay it. Besides, when we see it a motive of such sacrifice, it is a triumph

of principle, and as such to be respected; even though partaking a little of the barbarism—the blue paint and red ochre of our ancestors.

Within the twenty miles circle, to which Mr. D'Arc confined his ideas of neighbourhood, all were not so impracticable as some five or six families of the description above-named; but it is extraordinary how strong an influence they exercised over the less exclusive of the clique. Many who would have found the Moat a most agreeable house at which to visit, and would have considered Mr. D'Arc's sumptuous entertainments, and Lady Leverton's exquisite prettiness, adequate substitutes for higher claims to their regard, were too much in awe of old Mr. Montague's Squire-pride, of Lord Ernecliffe's aversion to new people, and the Duchess of Lithgow's excessive hauteur, —which would have driven her to take shelter in the housekeeper's room, rather than sit at table with a retired attorney,—to venture their own popularity in endeavouring to bring them

within the mystic circle of the old county people. Thus, when they did accept the invitations of the "Moat people" they talked of it, as of some condescension on their parts—some permitted degradation; like that which canvassing sometimes comprehends. The dinners given in return were cleverly arranged; but while D'Arc could scarcely find fault at being asked to meet his own visiting list, it put him in ill-humour to find how scrupulously they were confined to it.

Among the minor obstacles to Mr. Leverton D'Arc being a popular person, was one peculiarity, common to the rich *parvenu;* who, it may be often remarked, while spending thousands on entertainments, at which Apicius might have taken hints, are economical and regular in the general details of their living. He also entered into very ignoble particulars. He knew exactly how many stable brooms should be used, and grumbled if the number was exceeded. He could detect when a foot-

man applied a glass cloth to any service, where a duster would have been the correct thing. He had presumed to fish in the pig-tubs; and sent away a cook who had thrown into them, three loaves too stale to be eaten in the servant's hall. But, what was more against him than anything else, he had entered into a sort of beer-commutation; by which arrangement all his household had an allowance made to to them in specie, for any given quantity of beer they would mention as being sufficient for their consumption; the only fault, indeed, that could be found in this device of their master, was, that it did not provide for the entertainment of their friends; yet it involved great depreciation of his consequence.

Mr. D'Arc was confessedly no favourite in the housekeeper's rooms or servant's halls of his neighbours; and there is an under current of county gossip which very much takes its tinge from the above-named reservoirs. From thence it works its way into dressing-rooms, masculine

and feminine; issuing at last into the different *salons*, with those little decorations superadded, which all those who take upon themselves to repeat a story, feel obliged to throw in. People had not gone so far as the *clientèle*, who in the conventional phrase of pantries and harness-rooms, had pronounced Mr. D'Arc to be "no gentleman;" but there were many loop downs in his breeding which made them sensible, he was rather making a station than keeping it.

The men with whom he associated found there was nothing in common with them; though scarcely able to say why, since there was so much inclination to oblige and conform. The fact is, that that dreadful Salvador House Academy had less familiarized him with the reigning prejudices and ideas of these good squires, than would that same time have done, spent with the gamekeeper at Leverton Court. Neither was he ever quite at his ease; but there was a certain stiffness always visible in

his manners; as sure a proof of a desuetude to good society, as is the assumption of ease, when unsupported by the elegance of manner and *abandon*, which the consciousness of having nothing to hide, or to affect, produces.

There were still other trifles which impeded the cordiality, which some years acquaintance and custom encourages. Mr. D'Arc had subscribed on the first hinting of the matter, £50 towards the formation of an archery ground in the neighbourhood, being £40 more than any one else had contributed; and yet his warning people from fishing in the little river which wandered through his property, and which had never been preserved in the memory of man, gained him more odium, and was more talked of, than did his liberality in the subscription acquire for him praise. With a like perversity of feeling, while his guests had the privilege of dipping the tips of their fingers into a golden and jewelled chalice made from the

Cellini pattern, and filled with the most exquisite perfumed waters, handed after dinner by a page, who seemed to have no other office, they would gladly have compromised matters, and used their finger glasses, rather than that their horses should have been sent on half a mile to the nearest inn, instead of finding stable room at the Moat.

Even the perplexed D'Arc himself could feel that there was more of that mystical phantom *ton*, in the entertainments of old Squire Cavendish of Holme, than in his own; though the stingy old gentleman shrunk from what he called the "innovation" of introducing champagne at his table; and this, while to his knowledge his butler was dispensing tankards of the strongest ale at the servant's supper, and to which all were bid welcome. Where, too, could lay the subtile essence, which seemed to shed an atmosphere of good taste in rooms, where the old wainscot languished for fresh

paint, and the threadbare carpets a retiring pension? It was all an enigma; and he would return home and stare at his silk curtains and Axminster carpets, until he began to think that he had quite mistaken the thing in this elegance of decoration. Poor short-sighted D'Arc! Parodying the words of Shakespeare one might have whispered to him:

"Where nobility is, these are most noble,"

and have told him that people look more to the kernel than to the shell, for marks of gentle blood.

It was an arduous life which Mr. Leverton D'Arc had prescribed for himself; but how many, sharing the delusion, and in spite of the will-o'-the-wisp nature of the chase, pursue it with an ardour worthy a better cause. Milton has said, that "he who would write heroic poems must make his whole life an heroic poem." Borrowing the idea, the wealthy

and aspiring *parvenu* might be told, that he who would take the station of an aristocrat, must live the life of an aristocrat. The first thing, then, of which he should dispossess himself, must be the eternal and obtruding desire of impressing others with the belief of his seigniory. Those of gentle blood never take the trouble to induce conviction of an acknowledged fact. The next plebeian habit to be discarded, would be that of presiding over the details and decorations of the house and table. It is true that the master may have better taste than the servant; but the attending to such things engenders a meanness of spirit, even should it not find it already made.

The well-born and well-bred show care for the fitness of their household arrangements, by seeking the best servants. The *novus homo*, placing too much on what he vulgarly considers the secret of gentility, dares not

trust the superintendence to hirelings; and in consequence, his mind is furnished with the combined fittings-up of that of a groom of the chambers, a housekeeper, and a butler, whose duties he shares. With such occupations for his thoughts, it is difficult to slide at once into the man of fashion, of science, or of *vertu*, or of even the country politician or sportsman. He has taken a lower cast of character, and his every word and deed betray it. The difference between good breeding and high-breeding has been cleverly defined by the observation, that the one gracefully remembers the rights of others; the latter gracefully insists on its own. Low-breeding assumes a totally distinct character, and is usually shown by a bare and unqualified intruding of itself upon the notice of others.

The upstart has no forbearance on this point; and it is a trait of character brought from the lowest grade of society. The well-

bred man may be occasionally an egotist; but in the low-bred there is a restlessness when aught but himself, or that belonging to him, is discussed, that ever incapacitates him for that courteous adoption for the moment of the feelings and interests of others. As if aware of this thirst for notice and approval, people of a superior class lend themselves to its indulgence; and, by instinctive compliance, utter little admiring comments on everything brought to their attention, which they would never dream of retailing among their equals. However, this is returned with interest; and the underbred, true to their own thirst for praise, utter unceasing encomiums with a want of discrimination that is not the least disagreeable feature of their society.

Eulogy is an art that requires either the refinement of high-breeding, or the *bonhommie* of nature, to be genial. Mr. D'Arc had

neither. Whatever he may have once possessed of the latter, the last fifteen years of hard service,—that of studying how to be one with people above him, and who never failed to let him feel that there was a distinction,—had much effaced and warped the smoothness of his feelings towards his neighbours. This was made perceptible by the evident complacency with which he listened to every *contretemps* which befel them. A lost election —a daughter's marriage broken off—a son *plucked* at the university—and all such things, were unguents to his ruffled equanimity. Unhappily this disposition to look to the shadows in their neighbour's path, does not rest solely with the *parvenu*.

"Know ye that mankind praise against their will,
And mix as much detraction as they can.
Know ye that faithless fame, her *whisper* hath,
As well as trumpet."

There were many in the circle of Mr. D'Arc's

acquaintance, who in their turn heard, with that gratified sagacity which finds its prophecies fulfilled, that of late he had not been so prompt in paying his tradespeople as heretofore, and people nodded and looked wise. His wealth was the only point which distinguished him; and they were greedy in believing that that was crumbling away. Still, all this offered no interruption to the sickly show of amity which exists among the majority of country people. They still went to each other's splendid entertainments; still offering farther proof, were any wanting, that the English visit by prescription; that their banquets are more to astonish, than to gratify their *convives;* and that, in fact, they know nothing of the pleasures or humanizing effect which other nations find and feel in society.

During all this Bush-warfare between Mr. D'Arc and his exalted neighbours, none of the

struggles, the repulses, the success, or the offences, he had encountered, had been known to Lady Leverton. She had received all those who had sought their acquaintance, with kindness and cordiality; and she had been so received in her turn. She aimed at nothing more, neither was she qualified to examine whether it was to the unaffected simplicity of her manner, or to her link with nobility, to which was owing the greater popularity she secured, than did her husband. Her own wishes would have led her to have lived in that beautiful park and mansion, uninterrupted by the presence of visitors, who were always a restraint on her modest and retiring nature. But she knew that Mr. D'Arc sought the society of the highborn of their neighbourhood; and she therefore took her part in the duties it involved, cheerfully and calmly, too deferential to question the wisdom of the sacrifice of time and money, which it entailed on both, or to express other wishes.

However, her share of this work of society was not onerous. Mr. D'Arc took upon himself the whole perplexity connected with their visiting list, and even indited all notes of invitation and replies, forging a pretty little delicate hand for the purpose. To make the delusion more complete, he always wrote them at the exquisite little writing-table he had appropriated to his wife; and when he saw the scented billet duly sealed, with the Viscountess' coronet, under which was engraved the name of Ione, he felt that the irreproachable and ladylike missive must further conduce to his consequence. This idea of reflected *éclat* made him watch over the dress and jewellery of Lady Leverton.

Her exemption from the contumacious habits of Englishwomen, or her ignorance of the incontestable charter, by which they are supreme in their own dressing-rooms, was shown by the passiveness with which she re-

ceived her maid's announcement of the dress and decorations which Mr. D'Arc had selected for that day's representation. Her own little ponies would have as soon thought of striking for red rosettes, when blue were prepared for them, as would Ione have chosen satin, when velvet had been prescribed.

This freedom from the responsibilities of the toilet involved the absence of its pleasures; and an utter indifference to "stage effect," either in herself, or in others, while it left her the very model of high-bred tranquillity, and so far enchanted her husband, divested country society of almost all the excitement which it can offer to female perceptions. She never evinced this distaste to visiting to Mr. D'Arc, whose pleasure, she knew, was in such things; still she could not help rejoicing when a lull of dinner parties left her in quiet enjoyment of the happiness of home. A home which contained a gem—a blessing which none could appreciate

so highly as herself. It was a beautiful, healthy, merry little girl, to whom she had given birth about two years after her marriage with Mr. D'Arc.

CHAPTER IV.

"Voilà bien les sentiments d'un petit esprit, de vouloir demeurer toujours dans la bassesse. Ne me repliquez pas davantage: ma fille sera marquise en dépit de tout le monde; et si vous me mettez en colère, je la ferai duchesse."

MOLIÈRE.

THE Italians tell us to see Naples, and then die; inferring that there is nothing better to be seen. Lady Leverton, under the same excitement of feeling, might have said: "Live to be a mother, and then float away from a world of which thou hast tasted the most exquisite pleasure. Live to be a mother, and when at

thy child's first cry, thine heart leaps up for joy, bless God that the fruit has thus crowned the bud—the blossom of thy young years—that thou hast thus fulfilled the sanctified end of thy mysterious creation." Lady Leverton did not say this, but her whole being gave evidence that she felt it.

There may be cases where the absence of offspring is the highest blessing; there may be cases where the birth of a child is the greatest curse; but these must be instances where some law of nature, or of society, has been infringed. Where the current of existence runs on in an undistorted and virtuous channel, the mother's joy in her infant must be the most acute of which the human mind is susceptible; and the mother of to-day, and the mother of Eden, share the same reasonable and holy happiness, which, though based on the strongest of animal instincts, they know is "gotten from the Lord."

There was but one drawback to the felicitous

event which thus crowned the hopes of Ione. Her confinement had taken place during the absence of her husband, who was attending a contested election in the county town, where he was doing his utmost for the return of an unpopular but titled candidate. During the first hours of the infant's existence, life seemed to hang by such a fragile thread, that the nurse urged the necessity of immediate baptism. Lady Leverton was referred to for the name. There was but one presented itself to her in those moments of holy and grateful happiness, and she whispered the sacred name of "Mary." An express had brought Mr. D'Arc to the side of his beloved wife, full of joy at the intelligence it conveyed; but she saw a cloud pass over his brow when the events of the baptism were related to him.

He would have ambitioned some high-sounding name for the little nursling; something to show at once his taste, and refer to the battle fields from which he had actually deluded him-

self into believing the name of D'Arc was derived. Even Jehanne, or Joan, would have been better—but there it lay, nothing but a Mary. His old maiden aunt rose to his mind, Miss Polly Dark. She, too, was a Mary—no wonder that he frowned. But joy in his wife's safety, and the first feelings of fatherhood, soon smoothed his brow, and Ione never again saw him look crossly at aught concerning their beloved girl.

Doctors and nurses always offer some apologetic sentences when a female dares present herself as the first-born, where a large property and estate seem to demand a son and heir; and there are consolotary words uttered which would be certainly humiliating, were the thing of the despised sex able to hear them. At such times some remarks of barbarism seem to linger in people's minds; and we are reminded of the Jew's thanksgiving prayer, that he is not born a woman,—of Aristotle's proclamation, that a woman is a sort of monster man; and we

are rather led to think that those born of the wrong sex may consider it lucky that the tide of opinion is not quite of sufficient force to consign them to the nearest river, as their Hindoo fellow females are deposited in the Ganges. However, in after years, Mr. D'Arc made ample compensation for the slightly discourteous and depreciating reception given to his infant daughter, by the most unqualified adulation.

The prophetical assurance of the nurse and doctor, among other consolotary and stereotyped phrases, repeated more in answer to disappointed looks than to words—that the next would doubtless be a son,—was of none effect; and shared the usual fate of all soothsayings, based rather on the supposed wishes of the subject, than the prescience of the prophet. No other child arose up to disturb the undivided rule of little Mary D'Arc. The mother, true as all created things should be to the one creator, never formed a dissentient wish in matters so decidedly beyond the scope of earthly inter-

ference, as the existence of living souls. The father without such holy incitements to philosophy, and reasoning in the one tone to which all his thoughts and actions were attuned, saw in the beautiful little girl who flitted over the lawns of his domains in pursuit of butterflies, a far better means of his aggrandizement than the ordinary run of sons and heirs could promise.

To look for the brilliant things to be achieved for us by our children, is rather like little Mary's chase after the butterfly, which, when caught, turned out a dismembered thing, destitute even of the bright colours that excited the pursuit; but Mr. D'Arc did not so consider it, and went on castle-building most prodigiously.

In the heat of this aerial masonry, he had married his daughter to one of the five royal Dukes, who at that time paraded their ennui and their bachelorhood about the world; for which hymeneal a special suspension of the Act of Parliament might be easily obtained, it was then thought, by those whose wealth would be

a set-off against their failure in royal blood. The Duke of Devonshire was another bull's eye for the arrows of peerless young ladies of that age, in spite of the *cavendo* which his name might whisper to discourage them; Dorset, Manchester, Lorn, were also on the list; in short all the available stars of the peerage were by turns considered, until the old ditty in Blue-beard, "It's a very fine thing to be father-in-law to a very magnificent three-tailed Pacha," was echoed by his heart, though with some little variation in the wording.

Beauty and accomplishments, considered the usual cabala for working out the union of the daughters of Commoners to the sons of Peers, were anxiously cultivated by Mr. D'Arc in the person of his child. He had long known that there was another concomitant in the elevation of a girl to a rank above her, besides the mere seeing she was fair; and he hoped by a timely retrenchment, that Mary should enter life as a nominal heiress at least.

This was a sterner resource than quite suited the habits of profusion which had lately prevailed, but it should be resorted to. As for beauty, it seemed like fairy gifts to come to the call; accomplishments, too, appeared scarcely to wait the bidding; and there was indeed a fair promise of a harvest of attractions.

It was a happy episode in the life of Mr. Leverton D'Arc thus to watch the development of so bright a blossom. It had something of the quiet pleasure with which pineries and grape-vines are observed; and something of the excitement of training a promising aspirant for the Derby. It was like the possession of some master-piece of art, of which the daily observance gave unalloyed delight, while the expected sale was to ensure an influx of wealth; in short, it was present pleasure which must yield reversionary profit, and that was a bi-formation which pleasure rarely takes.

Lady Leverton shared in all this. She knew the great expectations formed by Mr. D'Arc for

his child, and shared in his exertions to promote the desired end. But there she unwittingly differed. She looked for the happiness alone, of her cherished Mary; and she was told, and she believed, that it was to be found with rank and distinction. He found a joy in the little girl, and the promise she even now gave of ultimate perfection; but as regarded her elevation, it was his own advancement which made that to be desired. Even now he speculated with gladness on the various gallantries of the royal Dukes, as affording proofs of submission to feminine sway, and defiance of public opinion; two things essential to the success of the plans he had conceived. It was a strange and deluding ambition which thus took possession of him, but so it was. His life's labour had now two channels in which his energies were spent. The one, the old task, that of taking his stand as a country gentleman; the other and later one, to gain by this distinction fresh links to a *clique*, which though not quite

so irreproachable as that to which his perseverance had procured him admission, was infinitely more piquant.

A change came over all this. The battle of Waterloo was fought and won; and the continent opened its arms to the pent-up islanders. Crowds of civilians jostled the army of occupation in its theatrical quarters, and Englishmen first awoke to the delights of a paradise of musical snuff-boxes and *ponche à la romaine*.

Whoever it was who first proclaimed that a Peru of pleasure was to be found in the mastered capital, does not appear; but in as short a time was raised, as great a multitude of followers, as ever was gathered for the Crusades; and that tide at once set in, which until the affairs of '48, has carried such vast currents of men and monies to the fair city of Paris. It then received a check. Men began to talk of *fraternité*. *Liberté, égalité*, could have been borne. But *fraternité!* It was too

open an evidence of evil intentions. Brotherhood, to run through the history of the world from Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, down to Romulus and Remus—and so on to those fractious young gentlemen, the Conqueror's sons, or even in later days to the Gloucestershire brothers, has ever been the signal and symbol of uncivil conduct. It frightened the English from Paris. Who could contemplate *fraternité* with a hero in a blouse, fresh from the barricades, without a shudder? However, in 1815, there were no such bugbears to affright well-meaning tourists. The Citizen Buonaparte had arranged everything most satisfactorily. Liberty and equality had been banished, to give place to some pretty stage effects of imperial dominion; and the people who revolutionised and became unruly under the slight snaffle-bridle of a mild monarchy, never dreamt of anything so ugly under the whip and spur of a despot.

All had been smoothed down—all, like the

meublement of their apartments, was polished mahogany and ormolu; and now nothing even remained of the terrible Emperor, but the eagle in all sorts of antics on their *pendules*.

Among the earliest of those who hastened in crowds to the so lately beleaguered city, like venturous boys who rush to the lake on the first intimation that the ice will bear, was Mr. Leverton D'Arc's family. Attracted by the rumour of the economical rate at which all the luxuries and *gentilesse* of life were to be obtained, he at once hailed the opportunity of leaving for a time all the expenditure necessary to the keeping up the rich county gentleman, and which militated so exceedingly against the dowry to be saved from his income for the future Duchess, as he loved to think the sweet little Mary one day would be.

Housemaids and footmen were now sent to the right about. Butlers and under butlers, were looking out for small road-side inns; and nothing remained of the large household of the

steward's son, but the gardener and his wife, who were left in charge of the mansion. To the French cook's representation, that it would be wise in Monsieur to take him to Paris, where, doubtless, Monsieur would still "receive," he gladly returned a flat denial; feeling a spiteful pleasure in thwarting one, who during the year he had been in his service, had never condescended to prepare any dinners, except those to which guests had been invited, leaving the kitchen maids to do all the cookery for ordinary occasions; the leisure this had left him, being employed in reading the few French novels the circulating library afforded, through which his progress might be traced by the ashes of his cigar.

In other circumstances, this dismemberment of all the aids and appliances of squirehood would have been a measure in itself humiliating, but that his neighbour the Earl of Deerslade, and some others, had just done the same; and when Mr. D'Arc found himself in the corner of

a comfortable travelling carriage, galloping with all the haste and clatter of French post-horses down the Rue de la Paix one fine summer evening, he felt himself the real *Milor Anglais*, as which he was hailed at the Hotel Mirabeau, where a *premier* had been secured for his occupation. The encountering the Duke of Wellington's carriage in the *porte-cochère*, who, for reasons best known to himself, was a daily visitor at the hotel, still further enhanced the *éclat* which seemed spread on all around; and Mr. D'Arc threw himself on the Utrecht velvet sofa in a *salon*, where all was marble, china vases and their crystal covers, huge mirrors, *pendules*, and a slippery floor, with feelings of pleasurable excitement, shared by the Viscountess and her daughter.

That same summer sun shone on strange sights and strange people,—even to look no farther than to the Calmuck who loitered through the galleries of the Louvre, or to that unique creature, an English soldier, dressing his

ration of beef, under fantastic and fading bowers, torn from the trees of the Bois de Boulogne. There was enough to make one doubt the credibility of one's eye-sight. All castes, all characters, all countries, had each their representatives: and Paris seemed one monster masquerade. Even the inhabitants seemed to forget that all these strangers came as conquerors. The conquerors too forgot their *rôle*; and, if occasionally dark looks were exchanged by the Parisians and their armed visitors, it was probably owing more to some personal incivility than a national feeling.

Mr. Leverton D'Arc moved among all these anomalies of an anomalous time, with interest and satisfaction. He was a great man, and he lived and consorted with great men; and yet the hebdomadal account, to which he had the satisfaction of seeing the *acquit* regularly affixed, was scarcely more in amount than that of the hecatombs of meat, consumed by the combined efforts of Monsieur Galette, and the

denizens of the servant's hall. It was a pleasure too to find that the French "picked up" at Salvador House Academy, was really of service; and no one was sufficiently uncivil to tell him that it was of the worst kind that could be "picked up."

There were other solicisms, which people passed over as quietly. The one, his telling an old officer, who stood by him, while witnessing the substitution of the *fleur-de-lis* for the golden bee in the throne-room at the Tuileries,—and who asked what they had been supposed to represent, that it was *B* for Buonaparte. The other, at a breakfast at Sir Hussey Vivian's, when the servant asked him if he wished his eggs *à la coque*, his telling him he preferred them *à la poule*. Still his Tooting French served him in good stead, and was of sufficient force to furnish the material of a *bon mot*, which drew upon him as much attention, as did a hundred fights upon the brave commander-in-chief.

Mr. D'Arc was in the garden of the Tuileries with Lady Leverton and their child, then about fourteen. The latter was playing with a little *barbet* her father had just given her, who, in a contumacious mood, set off with all his speed towards the *grille*, at the bottom of the Rue Castiglione. Mary followed him quickly, and they had began their race before Mr. D'Arc discovered they had quitted his side; and he only overtook her just as two gentlemen had caught her in their arms, and drawn her from the great danger which she had run, of being driven over by a carriage just then passing, but which, in her anxiety to overtake her dog, she had not perceived.

Mr. D'Arc was all gratitude to the gentlemen who had thus interposed, and who both seemed to rejoice that they had been the means of protection to the young girl, who stood blushing and panting with the little runaway in her arms, which a soldier had just recovered

for her. After a few words on the danger his child had encountered, from thus heedlessly running into the street in the heat of her pursuit, D'Arc politely asked the elder of the gentlemen if he might know the name of her preserver.

"Moi, je suis le Roi de Prusse," was the reply.

The Englishman smiled at the whim of a man without the least suite, thus adopting so sounding an application; and bowing, he turned to the other, with the interrogatory:

"Et vous, Monsieur?"

"L'Empereur Alexandre des Russes," was quietly answered, while his own question was courteously repeated to himself: "Et vous, Monsieur?"

D'Arc paused a moment, almost annoyed at what he conceived such gratuitous quizzing, from men evidently in the upper classes of society; but they had been kind to his child,

therefore forbearing to make any angry reply, he smiled ironically, saying:

"Ma foi, Messieurs, à peine vous m'avez laissé une couronne; mais—mais,—moi je suis le grand Mogul," and with affected majesty he strutted away from them.

The gentlemen laughed aloud, but good temperedly, as they also proceeded on their way. At the opera that night, to Mr. D'Arc's surprise, in the Emperor of Russia who was pointed out to him, he recognised the man who had thus designated himself; and which vouched for the truth of his companion. The Emperor also discovered him, and sent an aide-de-camp to request the attendance of the Great Mogul in his box. He enquired kindly for his beautiful and frightened child; and discovering that he was neighbour to some noblemen with whom he was acquainted, entered into lively conversation with him, laughing again at his *calembourg*, which he repeated with much

humour to the party in the box. D'Arc's star of aggrandisement was certainly at this period in the ascendant.

A few days after this, one of the female attendants at the hotel came to announce to the sight-seeking Mary, that the Emperor Alexander was then paying a visit to Mrs. Arbuthnot, whose suite of rooms were contiguous to their own; and that if she placed herself on the staircase, she would see him as he left the hotel. Mary rushed eagerly forward; her Twelfth-night characters rather lending the idea that she should see a majestic figure in robes and a crown, instead of the kind handsome man in a blue frock coat, who had so chivalrously drawn her from beneath the horse's feet. In a few minutes he was on the staircase, and though he was now habited in a green uniform, she saw at once it was the Emperor. He recognized her with a benevolent smile; and the open-hearted little thing, with the freedom which a

life of adulation and indulgence imparts, placed both her hands in those of the Emperor, who stooped to impress a kiss on her fair young cheek.

At that period when regality merged into chivalry, and kings and potentates seemed better pleased to be recognised as conquering soldiers, it seemed by no means dissonant with the times, that the Imperial Alexander should concede to the affectionate and *naïve* petition of the attractive child, who still held his hands and kissed them, to come and see her mamma. The impulse was not to be resisted; and as if all had been previously arranged, in the next minute Mary was leading the Emperor by the hand into the *salon* of her mother; the two aid-de-camps in attendance remaining in the ante-chamber. It was a considerable surprise to the Emperor after a few minutes conversation, which, as usual on the part of royalty, consisted in asking questions, to find in the

beautiful wife of the witty Mr. D'Arc, the widow of that amusing Leverton, who in his early youth he remembered as the favourite of the Russian court; but her farther introduction of herself as an ex-subject of his Imperial Majesty, appeared to excite the most intense interest.

Whether this was owing to the graceful homage tendered with simplicity, to him whom old Cossack notions made her regard as the father of his people, and with the same reverence as a Hindoo would bend before an incarnation of Brahma; or whether the Emperor really wished to collect some facts relative to that interesting people the Tchernomoski, and their hereditary foemen, the Circassians, did not appear; but certain it is, that this was not the last visit made to the beautiful Viscountess.

A dissipated and witty Frenchman, on hearing her eulogized by the Emperor, as a pearl of virtuous simplicity, opined that his Majesty would have been as well pleased to have found

her *une perle moins "précieuse;"* be that as it may, not a whisper went forth against her, and yet there was no relaxing of the attentions of the Emperor.

At the great review of the allied armies, Lady Leverton occupied a corner of the carriage of the Archduchess; and when the whole Cossack force passed slowly before the carriage, which they saluted, she was made to understand it was a little homage to herself, directed by the Emperor. It was a strange moment in her life; and as her eye rested on the well-remembered costume and character of one Cossack battalion, memory as by one mighty wrench took her back to the banks of the Kuban, and in imagination she was with her own affianced husband, and his sister-in-law, as before the period of her Circassian captivity. A little hand placed within her own, called her from that bygone home, in which her thoughts were wandering.

Mary had seen the large tear-drop gathering in her mother's eyes, and wondered at her emotion. The vision was dispelled; and the desolate Greek girl woke up to find herself the distinguished and respected favourite of an illustrious monarch and his family, the wife of a wealthy Englishman, the mother,—and it was the happiest realization,—of a beautiful affectionate child. Such revolutions in one life are not uncommon. They seem like *cahots* permitted to the wheel of fortune, a little to arouse that divinity from the usual monotony of her movements. Some of these same jolts are for weal, some for woe. The one that now placed Ione in the Imperial carriage, she by no means attributed to anything so mythological. She knew nothing of the goddess, or her conventional attributes. A little gold cross in her bosom, bade her by mute eloquence look to all that befel her as the works of a hand, whose ways were past finding out. This knowledge

made her practise that Christian difficulty, to be

> "Thankful for all God takes away,
> Humbled by all he gives."

The old French poet, Pibrac, inculcates a similar idea when he tells us:

> "Aime l'état tel que tu le vois estre.
> S'il est royal, aime la royauté;
> S'il est de peu, ou bien communauté,
> Aime-le aussi, car Dieu t'y a fait naitre."

Lady Leverton knew not these poesies; but her whole life with its contentment and moderation was an illustration of them.

Mr. D'Arc, on the contrary, had been all his life fighting against his *communauté;* and in his wish to belong to a more exalted state, he had cast from him all the peacefulness and comfort of that in which he had been born. It is a condition shared by many, and adopted by them with eyes open to all its pains and penalties. There is a clever

maxim, written by a clever man, and which has, doubtless, misled many, who think that rules of life can be taught by a witty axiom.

Colton says: "In all societies it is advisable to associate, if possible, with the highest; not that the highest are always the best, but because, if disgusted there, we can at any time descend; but if we begin with the lowest, to ascend is impossible. In the grand theatre of human life, a *box ticket* takes us through the house."

This is all self-evident as far as it goes; but the truth is suppressed, that it is possible to pay too much for this same box ticket; and this is surely the case where aught of independence or personal dignity is sacrificed. Could we in our malice devise a worse fate for any object of our ill will, than that they should, unsought, unchosen, be with those to whom their very subserviency is a plea for neglect and coldness? It is true, that by caprice the high-born will at times choose the

lowly for their companions; as, by the same fickleness of taste, maidens gather wild flowers to their bosom; but it is the exotic,—the finest garden blossoms,—which are alone placed in costly vases for decoration. Did a cowslip or wild anemone ever get beyond a wine-glass in a study or boudoir? This low ambition —this fever for association with superiors— this desire for "getting up in the world," as it is vulgarly called, even in fruition fails to gratify. The *parvenu* who succeeds in getting into a circle which has hitherto held him aloof, finds in its very accessibility to himself, a proof that it is not so exclusive as to bring honour to him by its suffrage. He aims at a higher flight, and then again commences all the wearisome manœuvring and pluming of the would-be eagle.

If a higher state must be sought for, let it rather be the ambition of the aspirant to obtain it by some personal weight or excellence, not by policy or servility. A very cursory

inspection of the Court Guide will bring to our notice the names of men of low birth, who have taken their station with the highest in the land; but a more minute investigation will show that their position, if it has any thing of stability, has neither been gained by servile acts nor parasitical subserviency; nor, which is a still more common measure with the base *millionaire*, by that profusion of expenditure which is spread like honey to attract the flies of the aristocracy.

The disjointed, dissonant and heterogeneous state of Parisian society in the winters of 1815 and 1816 may be a little understood, by the fact, that the son of old Jedediah Dark, the usurious and little scrupulous steward,—a mushroom grown in the very mire of peculation,—was in the very highest circle, and numbered among those who took the lead in all matters connected with the very agreeable task of marking time by every species of pleasure and prodigality. It is true that same

circle enclosed within its mystic round, a strange compound. Royalists of the first houses, brought by long obscurity to the philosophy of taking things as they found them; Buonapartists, afraid to withdraw, lest sympathy with the St. Helena exile should be attributed to them; diplomatists of all nations; the best blood of England; and it may be said, *en passant*, the lowest and least moral; these were the component parts of the one great whole, which, discrepant in all other things, united in the sole and exclusive pursuit of the wildest, and yet most exquisite revelry. And Mr. Leverton D'Arc, by some strange enchantment, formed the very queen bee of the swarm of his countrymen, who determined to see nothing in him but his magnificence and hospitality.

Dwelling in a magnificent hotel in the *Chaussée-d'Antin*, the *ci-devant* domicile of one of Napoleon's most superb and sybaritish generals, the Vicomte D'Arc,—as the French

persisted in calling him, not generally understanding that a wife's rank could be different to her husband's—could hardly realize the notion of his own identity. People who had *craned* him in England, now brought to his porter's lodge the most impressive letters of introduction; while the least courteous of his proud Sussex neighbours, seemed all bent in recalling to him proofs of the great intimacy which had existed between them. D'Arc affected cognizance of circumstances, which he knew were purely ideal; but in the fullness of his satisfaction at thus finding himself in the place of the courted, he was in too much good humour with the world to do more, in his assumption of the great man, than patronize.

The resolutions of economy which D'Arc had formed on the birth of his lovely child, were now entirely forgotten. Even the distant hope of one day seeing a coronet on her brow, was all absorbed in the enjoyment of the present

hour. A spirit of profusion possessed him, that laughed at the projected and peer-attracting dowry. He had learnt also to play deeply, and, as time passed on, suffered great losses; so that he began to regret the large sums he had spent in cold, exclusive England. He commenced energetic plans for raising fresh supplies.

The Moat House estate was entirely parted with; but there were moments, when, by his money-scrivener's knowledge, he was enabled to see in all the unanswerable language of pounds, shillings, and pence, that his means were fast finding a limit. The gaming-table, which had been resorted to as a fashionable pastime, became a speculation, but of that unsatisfactory kind, where money, like the sand of an hour-glass, ran in, only to be turned to run out.

Lady Leverton during all this was calmly quiescent. She performed her share of the duties pointed out to her, as she had done in

England, because they were duties and dictated by a husband whom she loved. But she gladly found, that, in the Parisian circle in which they now moved, a wife was the least prominent part of the appanage of a man of fashion, when the husband was inclined to forget it. Mr. D'Arc did forget it;—not in a manner to raise one feeling of jealousy or indignation in the bosom of his wife; but she became—what all women do to men engaged in any absorbing or exciting pursuit, and which does not stand the test of public opinion—an unconcerned, and, therefore, a disregarded object.

This tallied with early impressions, and the separate existence led by the sexes in the East; therefore, regarding the leisure it gave her rather as a boon than as a grievance, Ione found, with thankfulness, that there was little to interrupt the time she so heartily devoted to her child. This was the second time her non-interfering spirit led to evil. She ill-fulfilled the "look-out," the "preventive check," which an English wife

may enact for an English husband. But she was blameless. True to the impulse lent by first and youthful experience, she was rather the submissive and unpresuming handmaid, than the reasonable and responsible wife. If there were blame, it rested surely with those who transplanted her to a position foreign to her nature.

The only occasion on which Lady Leverton had ever urged a separate wish or opinion to him, whom a strictly religious feeling bade her regard as master, was in the matter of a governess. Her whole soul revolted at the idea of another being associated in that intimate degree, so as to share the sweet partnership which bound her to her child. Mr. D'Arc heard her reasons with indulgence; and it was decided that masters of every species should be engaged for the intelligent Mary, but that no hireling should take the mother's place by her side. The nurse who had lived with her from her

birth, and who still kept her post, facilitated the arrangement of dispensing with the governess.

The plan worked well. Already the harp concertos of Mr. D'Arc's daughter formed an agreeable break to those evenings, when a few selected friends met *en petit comité* to prove the excellence of his cook, and his bad luck at *écarté*.

Perhaps the extraordinary grace and liveliness of the young girl lent a charm to the performance; but her attractions were such, that again the old idea became paramount in the father's mind, of advantage to be derived from them. Yet it was not rank now that he so much ambitioned, as pecuniary assistance; for the ill-earned gains of the old Jedediah Dark seemed coming to their end. Mary married to a *millionnaire* might ward off ruin.

To bring her out at this young age would have been impolitic; but children's parties were

formed; at which young Englishmen, who, known as "Golden Balls," "Diamond Dust," and such *cognomens*, were kindly invited; and Mary, in a sort of intermediate costume between the child and the *débutante*, might have challenged the reigning belle of the season to have eclipsed her in grace, *ton*, or beauty.

However, the extraordinary admiration she excited rested there. Men, who saw her slight form glide through the quadrille, while her beaming eyes and smiling lips showed an intensity of enjoyment, quite distinct from that attached to exhibition—and who heard her merry, ringing laugh at all the pretty little gallantries they whispered to her, felt that she was still the unconscious happy child, who, in other scenes, would have entered with the same *gusto* into all the delights of trap and bat, or prisoner's base.

The child was petted, followed, and perhaps loved; but none sought more at the father's

hands than the privilege of seeing as much of this bright young creature as possible; and this, his hospitality and sociable disposition, made a matter of no difficulty.

CHAPTER V.

"Ainsi tout change, ainsi tout passe
Ainsi nous-mêmes nous passons,
Hélas! sans laisser plus de trace
Que cette barque où nous glissons
Sur cette mer où tout s'efface."

DE LAMARTINE.

How often we see men, who by lives of reckless and ruinous prodigality offer an example to others, die at the very moment when such a climax is wanting to the completion of the warning. We must not ennoble them by calling them the beacons of society. It would be a depreciation of the friendly lighthouse, which amidst storms and clouds throws out its

unfailing light. We must rather compare them to those lanthorns we occasionally see suspended to bricklayers' poles, which stretched across the street in an impromptu fashion, warn the passers-by that the way were better avoided. The spendthrift dies a beggar; "his place can no more be found." The poles and lanthorns are removed, and men forget that the road was ever unsafe.

Mr. Leverton d'Arc rose from a bed, which with its crimson velvet draperies and gold fringes resembled more an imperial throne than the couch appropriated for the sleep of a man who owned not a ducat, to write at once to his man of business. A sleepless night had shown him that something might be arranged by which his own and his wife's interest in the Leverton dowry might produce some present supply, more commensurate to the wishes of the prodigal than, what he considered, the pitiful five hundred pounds, doled out at the end of each half-year. With the judicial blindness so often

afflicting those who have had eyes open but for their own pursuits or pleasures, he saw not that the act would sink him in beggary, as well as be an overt act of robbery to his wife. Indeed, such was the madness with which he sought actual money to continue the desperate efforts made to redeem his lost fortunes at the gaming-table, that this sacrifice of the dowry would have been already attempted, but that he feared the necessary inspection of some papers connected with it, might perchance betray that the cousin who had inherited the empty title, might by a law process find some of the Leverton property still attached to it. This, however, must now be risked; and having determined on the step, he had only to prepare to mystify his lawyer regarding the papers he must bring over for the necessary routine of the business, and also to use his influence with the Viscountess, that, in the presence of witnesses permitted to question her, she might be induced to sign away her every claim.

In due time the man of law arrived, too fatigued, of course, to enter into business that evening, while Mr. D'Arc felt too excited to be in his society without reverting to it, and therefore decided on fulfilling a dinner engagement with Lord Stair, at that time at the very apex of renown for his exquisite table, leaving Mr. Joblyn to be entertained by the Viscountess and Mary.

Poor Mary! how little she thought that, while showing a thousand acts of attentive kindness to the tired and half-frozen lawyer, with the pretty impulses of happy girlhood, she was in fact securing a friend more valuable than all the people of consequence among whom she occasionally fluttered, and who vied with each other in spoiling her. How little she knew that all those attractions, which by a habit of display were always shown forth, were exciting an interest in a rough, ill-mannered Londoner, who would be her mother's security from difficulty and penury. Mr. Joblyn resolved that the life-

interest should not be alienated. However, there were other powers at work for the hindrance.

At the dinners of Lord Stair, where he presided with such ineffable complacency, no one could have asked the question,

> "Hath any rival glutton got the start,
> And beat him in his own luxurious art,
> Bought cates for which Apicius could not pay,
> Or drest old dainties in a newer way?"

All was perfect and supreme, and considered by those who understood such matters as inimitable. These irreproachable dinners were usually followed by what his Lordship termed some "mild *écarté*," limited to pieces of ten francs; and though larger stakes were occasionally indulged in, they were modestly played *à la bobêche*, and of which Lord Stair took no cognizance.

That night, by following up a run of good luck, magnanimously betted against by the very young heads on the adverse side, D'Arc at one

moment found himself the winner of a hundred napoleons. Though the exquisite wines of his host might have produced a certain refraction in his view of objects, he had enough clear perception left to feel that these one hundred napoleons were very necessary for some fees and other matters connected with the business about to be transacted; and also that if he remained longer, they would in all probability soon pass by the *bobêche* to the other side of the table; therefore, feigning an engagement, he abruptly left the party. His cabriolet was not in the courtyard below; but a dry, clear night tempted him to set out on foot. Excited and pre-occupied, he was scarcely sensible of the biting frost and sweeping north wind of the January night; but it made itself felt. The next morning he was too unwell to rise—the doctor who was sent for pronouncing him to be suffering from inflammation of the lungs.

The sick man sent for Mr. Joblyn to his room, who, furnished with his parchments,

drew a table near the crimson canopy under which, with starting eyes and swollen lips, lay the self-beggared man, still intent on completing the ruin he had worked. But he was all unequal to the task. His head too wandered; and such sentences as "*je marque le roi,*" "*je gagne le vol,*" in a grating, grasping voice, were occasionally mixed up with questions relative to the papers Mr. Joblyn had brought from England.

Leaving him under the care of the alarmed Viscountess, Mr. Joblyn begged to be shown to the sitting-room of Miss D'Arc. He found her alone, with a countenance sad and sorrowful. It was the first grief she had known. By an uninterrupted system of indulgence and kindness, her father had deeply endeared himself to her; and though of late years she had seen less of him, there is a natural font of filial affection in all well-ordered hearts which requires little more than the name of parent towards which to direct its course.

On the entrance of Mr. Joblyn, the young girl looked anxiously to him for comfort. He had none to give her, for he had seen enough to show him the precarious state of Mr. D'Arc; and they sat in silence—Mary trying not to cry, and the lawyer thinking how it was possible to prepare that bright, young creature for the storm which he felt too sure was about to break over her, even should the father's life still be spared.

Having been the medium of all Mr. D'Arc's money transactions, he was aware of the deep involvements under which he laboured; while the few hours he had passed with Mary and her mother the preceding evening, had shown him how wholly unequal they were to meet the change of circumstances which he felt must inevitably befal them. A survey of the room in which he sat, still more confirmed him in this impression. He saw the harp, the piano, the guitar, reposing in all the glory of mother-of-pearl and blue ribbons on the sofa; a landscape

in oils, half-finished on an easel; a bust on a drawing-table, of which a very bad copy lay beside it; some exquisite little gold working implements on the table; and though these gave promise of some useful art, Mr. Joblyn guessed that they had only reference to the magnificently-covered embroidery frame which stood beside the now inactive Mary. This was all discouraging. £1,000 a year and an unknown sum in debts! What had all this *bijouterie* of life to do with the plain and matter-of-fact cares which lay in store for the pampered girl? He took up a morocco-bound writing-book which lay before him. As he turned its leaves, he rested at a page which, to his dim eyesight, appeared rather a complicated exercise in arithmetic.

"Oh, you do cyphering, I see!" the lawyer said, with an air of satisfaction.

A smile trembled on the red lips of Mary, as she explained that it was a sonnet of Goëthe,

copied in the German character, which he was examining. He pushed the book from him in disgust, and said, with something like asperity:

"But you surely have learnt to keep accounts?"

"Oh, dear no!" Mary answered, rather indignant at the aspersion. "Monsieur Verney said a little was necessary for the first rules of perspective; but he found my eye so correct, he has dispensed with that troublesome thing altogether."

"But do you never keep accounts?" asked Mr. Joblyn.

"Certainly. That is, nurse does; and gives them in every week, to the superintendent. Those sort of people always do it more cleverly than any one else."

Mr. Joblyn uttered something between a snort and a groan. Mary guessed it was in disapproval; but on what point she could hardly

surmise, so could neither defend or palliate her fault. After a pause, Mr. Joblyn said, gloomily:

"And do you know nothing of the value of money?"

"Oh! pardon me," she said quickly; glad in the thirst she had for pleasing and surprising everybody, to be able to do something that was required. "Question me on the money of the whole continent, and I will answer you. The Napoleon is worth sixteen shillings and eightpence; the *doppia d'oro* of Genoa is ninety-six livres; the *sequin* of Milan is worth eleven Italian *lire*, and ninety-four centimes; the Roman *seguin* is worth twenty *paoli* and a half—a *paolo* is about sixpence English, and twelve *sous* French. The gold ducat of Berne is worth seventy-two *batz*. But poor papa!" she said suddenly, breaking off from the rehearsal of her money tables; "Do not let us talk any more about this tiresome money, dear

Mr. Joblyn; but think, what can be done for him. Perhaps some other doctor, besides Dr. Chermside, might be of service; Monsieur Dupont, or the Grammont's doctor, or both."

Mr. Joblyn took her hand kindly. His contempt for her flimsy attainments all merged into pity for her desolate position, and into affection, which in spite of himself seemed taking possession of his heart. He promised to do all that she desired; and left her for the purpose of sending for additional advice. But it was all in vain. Mr. D'Arc died during the night.

The most painful task now devolved on Mr. Joblyn. It was to make known to the widow, and that without loss of time, the state of ruin in which her husband's affairs were left, amounting to that pitch of difficulty and exhausted resources, that the news of his death, he was confident, would bring a host of creditors into the house; a catastrophe which might not

be confined to rendering them homeless, but, for what he knew to the contrary in his ignorance of French law, involve the widow in suits at once distressing and ruinous. There was but one step he could counsel her to take; and that he did strongly and with vehemence. It was at once to send for passports, and with Miss D'Arc and her own *laquais*, a young and kind-hearted Swiss, at once set out for England; while the announcement to the requisite authorities of the death of Mr. D'Arc should be delayed in the best way he could devise.

Bewildered and sorrow-struck, Lady Leverton had nothing to urge against this step, but the want of affection which it seemed to evince, to leave one beloved, so recently dead. Mr. Joblyn grew furious at her hesitation; and Mary, with quicker perceptions than her mother, who had hitherto led a life which had neither called for thought or action, seeing by the manner of the agitated lawyer, that it was, in his opinion at least, urgent, added her

words to his. The consent was given, and rapid preparations were made for their departure.

The young girl seemed at once to step out of the child, fostered but for fashion and frivolity, and took from Mr. Joblyn directions and counsels as to their proceedings, with a solidity and intelligence which he never expected after his inspection of her room, and which he called a "workshop of idleness." To her was confided the napoleons so timely won by the fanatical worshipper of *ton*, her wretched father. The nurse took care that eider-down quilts should be placed in the carriage, and on a bright but freezing afternoon in the month of January, they quitted a scene whose glitter and gaiety seemed to mock the sorrow of the widow and orphan, as they passed rapidly down the *boulevard* on their way to the barrier.

All fell out as Mr. Joblyn had foretold. The hitherto confiding creditors of the English prodigal had snatched eagerly at every species

of his property they could make available. In a fortnight Mr. Joblyn joined the Viscountess and Mary at his house in Newman Street, with the information, that every vestige of their Parisian possessions had been sacrificed to the still unpaid creditors.

The kind-hearted, though somewhat parsimonious lawyer, was not in a position to offer them a lengthened asylum in his own house; but as it was necessary that he should occasionally see Lady Leverton on business connected with her dowry, and other matters, by his recommendation they took a small house in Upper Baker Street.

Added to their sorrow for the death of one they had both so dearly loved, there were many griefs attached to their present position, not the less acutely felt though unconnected with the affections of the heart. Without the intention of wounding them, and yet with a want of caution natural to his blunt character, Mr. Joblyn had made both Ione and her

daughter feel that there was much of disgrace in their changed condition; and that it was impossible for those who knew of the lavish expenditure of Mr. D'Arc, and the immense debts he had left unliquidated, to exempt from participation in the odium connected with all this, those who had shared in the luxury which had worked this ruin. This was of itself sufficient to make both Lady Leverton and her child shrink from the recognition of any of their friends; but there was still another cause for the strict privacy they maintained.

Accustomed from earliest infancy to all that elegance and refinement which had cost her so dear, Mary D'Arc felt herself, in what Mrs. Joblyn called "a very genteel lodging," surrounded by the grossest signs of squalor and bad taste. The staring scarlet stuff curtains trimmed with black cotton velvet; the huge mahogany and horsehair sofa with its slippery, hard bolsters, like two monster rolls of sticking-plaster;- the rickety chiffonier in gold

and imitation rosewood, with its blue plaited, cotton doors, and the atrocious mahogany coffer, called a tea-caddy, placed in the very centre of it, with two bits of Derbyshire spar on each side, as decorative supports; a Pembroke table with spindle legs, and a green baize cover hanging over it, all gave poor Mary the impression that she had really come down to the lowest grade; so exactly did their present rooms correspond with what she recollected of their housekeeper's room at the Moat House.

She breathed not a word of dissatisfaction to her mother; but at times, as she sat upright on the shining black sofa, feeling in a very abyss of vulgarity and bad taste, tears would gush down her cheeks from the sense of desertion and loneliness. Still, how could she wish to see any one, who had once known her in such different circumstances? The idea brought blushes to her cheeks, and she felt that solitude and neglect must be her lot; and

then she would look wistfully to the fierce-looking tiger, *couchant* on the hearth-rug, who gleamed at her with horrible red worsted eyes, until she felt that it would be almost better to be in the wild woods with such a gentlemanly-looking beast, rather than confined within walls, where all was so sordidly decent, and irritating from its contracted propriety.

In accordance with the strict incognito which they felt it necessary to observe, Lady Leverton and her daughter only walked in the early part of the day; and with their faces shaded by thick crape veils, they could neither recognize or be recognized by those they met, even had they been acquaintances. However, one fine July morning, Mary returned from a walk she had taken with her nurse, with a face radiant with excitement, and the glow of some unusual joy.

It appeared that they had been some little distance on the Highgate Road; and the better to inhale the fresh air from the hills, Mary

had thrown back her veil. They had met a gentleman on horseback, who, after intently observing her, had jumped from his horse, which he left in the charge of his groom, and had with much friendliness accosted her.

"It was that dear, old Spaniard, mamma," Mary uttered rapidly, continuing her narrative, "who came to one or two of our *bals d'enfans*. Do not you remember him,—Count Fernan Nuñez? He would teach me the bollero. I am sure you must recollect him. Oh! he was so glad to see me, and asked so kindly for you."

Lady Leverton looked anxious as her daughter spoke; who, answering rather to her looks than to words, added:

"Oh! he knew all about us, and about poor papa, and our loss of fortune; and he said that it was no reason or inducement to us for living in such seclusion; that our friends would rejoice as much at seeing us now

as formerly; and that he was sure when the Countess L——, with whom he dines to-day, hears of our being in town, she will feel hurt that we have taken no pains to find her out, and come very soon to see us."

This was all repeated with that oracular verbosity with which very young girls seek to impart the sanguine impressions which make the gladness of youthful hearts. However, her words had effect; and, mingled with a feeling of embarrassment at the idea of receiving those of a grade so much higher than Mr. Joblyn had taught that in her present condition she should aim at associating with, there was much pleasurable emotion to Lady Leverton in the discovery, that the agreeable Spaniard, who she knew was now Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, should thus recollect the hospitality shown to him in Paris. But the next day, it was with much agitation of spirit that she thought it was just possible that the Countess

L——, then the Russian Ambassadress, knowing the interest the imperial family had ever evinced for her, might call.

While discussing this probability, and looking with additional disgust at the detail of their unameliorated drawing-room, Mary perceived the Countess on the opposite side of the street, with her two little boys, and followed by a servant in undress livery. They were evidently looking for the house; and on catching sight of the bright-looking Mary, immediately crossed; and in another minute, the Countess was kindly and affectionately greeting them, mingling such reproaches as rather added to the gratification her courtesy had excited.

"How can I ever be pardoned by the Arch-Duchess for not sooner finding you? And it is your coldness, your negligence, which will have brought me into disgrace!" the Countess said, playfully, still holding the poor widow's hands, and looking fondly into her tearful eyes; while with the *savoir* of a high-bred woman, she continued

her friendly questioning; thus giving Lady Leverton time to recover that tranquillity which usually marked her manners.

In a very short hour, the whole of what had befallen them was confided to the Countess, who, with the decision and quick-sightedness which marked her strangely-gifted character, whether in the arrangement of a dinner party, or in a scheme of the most astute diplomacy, protested, that the English lawyer was quite wrong in the system of seclusion he had prescribed, and which must be put an end to.

It was quite absurd to talk of economy with a thousand a year. For two ladies, it was ample fortune. Few *douairières* in St. Petersburgh had half so splendid an income. They must go to Brighton, where the Court then was, and where they would find a society befitting their station, though on a less expensive scale than in London: and there the lovely Mary would be known and appreciated, in-

stead of vegetating in a situation so little suitable.

The Countess L—— left Lady Leverton and her daughter, filled with the most pleasurable feelings at her excessive kindness and condescension. She was kind, and intended to be still more so. That is, she meant to arrange everything regarding their moving to Brighton; and to give them fortitude to resist this terrible lawyer, who, like some grim enchanter, would still hold them in thraldom.

Further still, her Excellency proposed obtaining for them the best introductions in Brighton; which, in those days, usually contained a little galaxy of *haut ton*. And then she would write to the Arch-Duchess, and tell her all she had done for the charming Viscountess. And was all this undertaken for the Viscountess proper, or for the Imperial Helena's friend? Man's diplomatic moves may be seen into—a lady's never. So we will not stay to inquire.

As regards the condescension which the widow ascribed to the Ambassadress, that was a cobweb phantom. The Countess L—— had made the acquaintance of the D'Arc family in Paris, when they were at the very height of the distinction—which there so curiously had crowned the efforts of the steward's son—and the acknowledged friends of the Emperor and his sister-in-law. Not that Mr. D'Arc had made a boast of this; he was too well confirmed in the brilliant circle, to which, for his undoing, some evil genius had lured him, to take the trouble of talking about it; and the Countess L—— had been well pleased to be of their acquaintance.

She had been informed, at the time of his death, of the apparent break up of his affairs; but in Russia, where people will spend in a season at the capital the fortune which would have kept them in comfort all their lives on their estates, she had learned not to be shocked at such things. In truth, condescension was

not one of her Excellency's virtues. She would arrange a tea-party for her lady's maids and dressers; she would chat with a common sailor who might bring a curious parrot for sale; but she never associated with those she considered beneath her.

The Viscountess and Mary followed the Ambassadress to Brighton, who, in a fortnight after their first meeting, left town for the Pavillion. Mr. Joblyn could not forbear speaking a few dark words—half in warning, half in evil prophecy; still, they were accompanied by such kind actions, that, as he stood at the door of the carriage that he had purchased for them, and which, now duly packed, with Glaire the Swiss and the nurse behind, seemed the very enchanted carpet of the fairy tale, Mary could not resist kissing the honest, rough hand which held hers, that the kind lawyer might a little understand her warm feelings of gratitude. Still he looked sad and discontented as the carriage

drove off, in spite of all her efforts to cheer him.

The truth was, that the Viscountess, so soon embarking into an expensive life, was a subject of much anxiety to him. She was totally devoid of capital; and he had much hoped, that by a twelvemonth's strict economy, she might have set aside a few hundreds, which, in some future difficulty, she might greatly require. This idea was now entirely set aside; and the careful lawyer could not but regret that it was so, in spite of all Mary's elation and prettily reiterated words of rejoicing.

The major duomo of the Ambassador had secured for Lady Leverton a long, sentimental-looking cottage on one floor, all white-wash and green window frames, and which then stood on a sedgy lawn somewhere on the west cliff, where the Bedford Hotel and Regency Square now stand. It seemed a perfect elysium to Mary, with the blue sea sparkling under an

August sun as seen from the windows, from whence she also beheld gay and gladsome groups walking and riding; and life appeared brighter than even her brightest dreams had pictured it.

To trace the Brighton of 1817 in the Brighton of 1851 would offer as much topographical difficulty, as the attempt to discover in Layard's unearthed Nineveh what it might have been in the days when the Assyrian war chariots left their track upon its pavements. Changes almost as vast have taken place in the "Queen of Watering-places;" and the antiquarian might whet his guessing faculties on many mysteries as to locality, as well as of circumstance. One may be mentioned as an example, which will elucidate at once a problematical term, now in general use in our language, and of which few can explain the derivation. Since post-chaises have become as fossils, to be dug from the hiding-places furnished by time, all vehicles let out for hire, of whatever

size or shape, have assumed the generic name of "Fly." Were the world at large asked what is the derivation of this word "Fly," shrewd guessers would refer to the names formerly given to coaches, in allusion to their assumed speed; such as the Salisbury Fly, the Reading Fly, and many others. But any one whose memory could take them back to the Brighton of 1815, would recollect that there was then one only available conveyance to be hired to take Dowagers to evening parties, and which, on the principle of *lucus a non lucendo*, was called a Fly-by-night. This vehicle was like a *vis-à-vis*, and drawn by the hand. It was kept by an ex-servant of the Duc de Guiche when he was in the 10th Hussars, and who naming it after his master, called it the Duke di Gwichy. From this invention arose others of the same kind. In time they were built larger, and horses were attached to them. So there were horse-flies and hand-flies, and people smiled when they spoke of them. The horse species

are now widely spread, but they all had their origin and name from the Duke de Guiche Fly-by-night of Brighton. *Ah! qu'il est beau, le savoir!*

CHAPTER VI.

"Un papillon volait autour d'une chandelle ;
Ah! fuyez, fuyez, lui dit-on,
Petit imprudent papillon.
Mais autour de la flamme il revint de plus belle,
Bientôt il y brula son aile."

By the good offices of the Countess L——, Lady Leverton and her daughter were in course of time introduced to a select and agreeable circle of acquaintance, making up in refinement and elegance for a slight deficiency of wealth. Of unimpeachable good taste and fascinating in outward seeming, still they were only the

offsets of the first class of London society, not aspiring to the dignity or standing of the parent tree. With such people, the pure simplicity and ingenuousness of Lady Leverton's character was in an instant understood and appreciated, while in her manners there was a tranquillity which gave her a weight and consideration, at which she was far from aiming.

Mary, with all the spirits and powers of enjoyment of seventeen, was always charming; and there was a childlike *abandon* in her manners, an affectionate and earnest vivacity in her every word, that, while it was the evidence of a kind heart which had never met rebuff, carried all liking captive. She was too pleased to do all the pretty things she could do, ever to regard them in the mere light of display; and whether she executed some difficult *fantasia* on the harp, or sang to the guitar some wild Spanish air, in which the heart's frenzy was sighed out in faultless melody—or else mai-

shalled a merry troop in all the then mysterious figures of a quadrille, it was done with the same unconsciousness of exhibition—with the same perfect sense of enjoyment.

To this same quadrille-dancing was owing the introduction of Lady Leverton and her daughter to the Pavillion, at that time the very caaba of the Brightonians. There have been presentations to royalty under less unquestionable circumstances; but who have ever failed in attributing some merit to self, under the first excitement of an invitation to the regal circle? This would have been in the present case, however, an overt act of vanity *prepense; poule* and *pantalon* stood so confessedly as the reason for the Viscountess and her daughter's bidding to the palace.

At this period, dancing—though an amusement the Regent had never much recognised as such—was now in great force at the Pavillion. The truth was that two American ladies, whose beauty had received the stamp

of the Duke of Wellington's approbation, and the further success of pleasing the Prince, were at that time on a visit to the Pavillion, where, through their care in procuring music and in teaching the figures, quadrilles, then hardly known in England, were introduced for the evening's amusement.

In our insular country, which had gone on in happy ignorance that there could be a more lively or graceful dance than that in which, to a Scotch air, couples rushed up and down an avenue made of other couples, who in their turn took to rushing, the quadrille was quite a *ballet d'opéra.* The Regent was delighted, and every facility was afforded to the fair Americans for bringing it out. Young ladies were soon found who had, or were easily taught, some insight into the evolutions of the dance. But the *forte* of Englishmen lies not in their feet; and the boldest islander feels a trepidation when making, as he conceives, a fool of himself. Besides

this difficulty, the usual guests at the Pavillion were by no means dancing men; for while grace and beauty seemed the only passport necessary for females, old age and ugliness appeared the *desiderata* for the masculine guests.

Accordingly at that time, when the Regent, who—as old ladies say, "made up very well"—stood surrounded by such admirable foils as the Marquisses Headfort, Hertford, and Cholmondeley, Lord Arran, Lord William Gordon, old Dr. Blomberg, the orange-coloured Spaniard Count Fernan Nunez, the white ferret-looking Prince Esterhazy, the coarse features of Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, and many of the same description, he really felt and looked an Apollo in a group of admiring and courteous Satyrs. But these gentlemen, though doubtless fulfilling all the duties required of them, were not a promising corps for quadrilles; and the whole affair would have fallen to the ground, but that it was at length made known to Mrs. P—— that an

Infantry Regiment, then in Brighton, and which had lately left the Army of Occupation, numbered among its officers some expert quadrille dancers. This was mentioned to the Regent, and a requisition was made to the Lieutenant-colonel of the regiment that he should furnish a list of his dancers.

Tell it not to *the* Duke; but the consequences of this list were, that men, whose standards bore the names of Minden, Corunna, Salamanca, Vittoria, Pyrenees, Nivelle, Orthes, Waterloo, read in the orderly book the instructions, that at such an hour they were to repair to the dwelling of Mrs. P——, who occupied a house in the Pavillion grounds, *for the purpose of practising quadrilles!* This is a thing of olden time scarcely to be credited, but it is nevertheless an historical fact.

The officers, with the feeling of gentlemen, found it an infringement of their dignity, which not even the courteous reception of them in the evening by the Regent could efface. Perhaps

what a little added to the bitterness which this service called up, was the fact, that their partners seemed to consider them quite in the light of official dancers, and beyond the little curtsey at the end of the quadrille, repeated when conducted to their seat, awarded them no further attention. Still, all this was made as much a matter of military duty, as the guard of sentries mounted day and night around the Palace, and as such could as little be attempted to be evaded. How "The Times" and its tiny echo "Punch," would thunder at such an outrage of supremacy in these days, and of such an use being made of the service companies of the King's Own Light Infantry!

It was all too charming to Mary D'Arc, who, as the most accomplished dancer, and the loveliest creature in the sets thus formed by Royal authority, would hear an expressive murmur of admiration as she sprang forward on the points of her sylph-like feet in *l'été*, which it was then the fashion to dance, not slide through; her

full short dress of "woven wind," held delicately by her finger and thumb, her head thrown coquettishly back, rather inclining to her right shoulder, and a smile playing on her bright red lips—a smile not less adapted for shewing the dazzling pearls within, than for speaking her own glad pleasure in the dance, adding to her charms.

Could the defunct Mr. Leverton D'Arc have seen in some of his dreams of the future aggrandizement of his child, the *empressement* with which His Royal Highness the Duke of C—— led, or rather carried, the merry girl to the refreshment room after each quadrille, in utter disregard of the claims of her partner, the speculating father might have built more sanguinely on the suspension of the excluding marriage act in his daughter's favour. Lookers-on might have judged as he would have done—both erroneously. His Royal Highness regarded the beautiful girl as all kind-hearted men do the young and gentle-humoured. If

the truth must be spoken, it may be told that he was indeed at that time speculating on the possible union of the blood-royal and the subject; but the subject in this instance was an Oxfordshire heiress of uncounted wealth.

The avidity with which Mary D'Arc entered into every description of gaiety during this her first season in Brighton, was produced by her experiencing at its extremest point, that which De Lamartine expresses so eloquently:

"Ce vague enchantement, ces torrents d'espérance,
Qu'éblouissent les yeux, au seuil de l'existence."

It is hardly to be explained by anything analogous. Men may hunt, men may fish, men may shoot, may study, may game, may eat, may drink; but they never do any of these things with half the gusto, with which young girls dance. The truth is, that dancing unites all that is exciting to their every feeling; and comprises in its pleasures, the child's love of merry movement, the young girl's innocent

pride in her attainments, and the dawning woman's satisfaction in being sought and preferred, even for that very brief little wedlock, which exists during the five figures of a quadrille.

Lady Leverton, in her indulgence for her child, and ignorant that all English young ladies did not thus dance the hours away, attempted no opposition to her dissipations, except when a pale cheek at breakfast told of the late vigil. This was generally the case when Mary had been entrusted to the chaperonage of a friend, the mother usually enforcing better hours; but healthy seventeen rarely loses its roses long, and a walk, a ride would bring back the gladsome girl, fresh as the most unsophisticated mountaineer ever hopes to be.

Thus the winter passed. And then summer brought its pleasures; and sailing parties to Worthing, picnics to Bramber Castle, races and race-balls, still kept Mary in a very atmosphere of excitement. She was the avowed gem of each gay group—the one bright star to which

all eyes were turned. The men offered their homage under the guise of indulgence to the spoilt child; the women shared in the show of kindness; not daring to manifest, or indeed scarcely to feel jealousy at the success of one so young and open-hearted,—one whose every gesture was grace, whose every clear and honest look, was the fond, searching glance of innocence and happy girlhood.

> "She was just then in the unclouded May
> Of rarest loveliness, and many a wight
> Sighed for her sorely many a day and night.
> Even in her April she made scores of fools,
> If love be folly, as the unlovely say."

Borrowing from the same author, we may add—

> "Whene'er she walked abroad, you might have seen
> How many a swain the self-same way would choose,
> How many a heart all lesser care would lose,
> But there to meet her at each turn she took,
> And gain the ruinous bliss of one sweet look.
> They track'd her steps like arrant spies—I mean

Like lovers. There is no espionage
To equal theirs, who not alone with sight
Can watch and watch, but with the very might
Of heart and soul."

With all this, which may scarcely be called poetical exaggeration, Mary D'Arc had no declared lover.

It is a trait of English character, but a trait also of sensitive delicacy and high-souled pride, that our men rarely betray a passion which is not met, or feigned to be met, by a corresponding feeling. Without such an encouragement the Frenchman dares all—the Italian hopes all—the German smokes and despairs, but still loves on. The Englishman dares little, hopes little, and despairs little; and once finding that daring, hoping, and despairing are equally vain, he tears the passion from his breast with a manly resolve, which scorns to be a procession captive.

There is no stronger repellant than that ease of manner,—that indifference to the feelings of

others—which the joyous spirit of youth lends even to the kind-hearted; and this, when joined to extreme beauty, is the antidote to the charms which destroy. It was so with those captivated by the personal attractions of Mary; her glad humour startled them. Some took it for a coquetry of constitution, and design; others saw it as the immature spirit of the girl, and respected it; yet, much to Lady Leverton's wonder, who with bygone simplicity, thought that attentions bespoke love, and that love must lead to marriage, no suitor had yet asked her daughter's hand.

There were still other reasons for the fervour of the evident admirers which Mary attracted going off, like the corruscations of a badly made firework, without the regulation "pop" at the end. The majority of the male portion of the gay circle in which she moved, were not, to use the conventional phrase, "marrying men." That is, they lacked that stability and dignity

of mind, by which men are alone enabled to love virtuously, and with constancy. They were flutterers, in the extremest sense of the word,—wanting neither means nor attractions to gain or to maintain wives; but owning a greediness of pleasure, a jealousy of supremacy in their own tiny sphere, a selfishness engendered by indulgence, which made them renounce even the bare effort of seeking happiness in married life —a happiness that began at the creation, and which we are by no means assured was blighted by Eve's misdoings, however much of other evil was produced.

One excuse can be offered for the prosperous, popular, and yet self-doomed bachelor. His effect is all for outside show. He dreads removing the veil between him and any of his female worshippers. The idol has only been "got up" for the niche he occupies; nearer examination might expose its bare clay and hideous proportions. Perhaps another palliative

for the sin of old-bachelorhood may be urged, from the fact, that in gay society women attract more than they attach.

A French authoress, speaking of the advantages of taste and talent to a woman, when they retain her in the bosom of her family, of which she is the centre, adds: "Tandis qu'ailleurs elle n'est qu'un accident."

It was exactly thus with half the beautiful and "well found" young women, who floated so gaily on the surface of the society, of which they were the charm; their homes knew them not; they formed no centre, around which the happiness and charities of life revolved. They were, in fact, "*accidents;*" and men do not marry "*accidents.*"

Lady Leverton, whose opinions still bore the impress of the simple people among whom her early years had been passed, and who, thinking with the Scotch song, that "cats love milk, dogs love brew, lads love lassies, and lassies

love lads too," and, therefore, that cats should not be debarred milk, or lads and lassies marriage,—still withheld from her child her disappointment at the delay of the *dénouement* which was to crown the busy scenes and acts of the merry melodrama of the past year.

As for Mary, she still played her part, never thinking what the morrow was to produce, unless on that morrow was promised the completion of some gay ball dress, or what was better, the realization of the looked for ball itself. With regard to marriage, it entered as little into her thoughts as heaven. Like that, it was an unknown fairy-tale sort of future felicity, meant some day to reward virtue and beauty; but the truth was, that her virtue and beauty got so well rewarded in the present, the prospective look-out failed in attractions.

Mary had nothing sentimental in her nature. Her education, with all the accomplishments and talents showered upon her, had been strictly matter-of-fact. Her father and mother

likewise were the plainest thinkers, and the plainest talkers, so that her imagination had never been awakened. She had read but little; and, though exceedingly well-informed, her knowledge had been gained from lesson-books, and learnt with the same exactness as the multiplication table. You could not inquire concerning the obscurest river, or some particulars of a personage, however little known, of classical or mythological history, but she could at once give information on the subject; and that, not with the pedantry of a blue-stocking, but with the pretty earnestness of the well-taught child.

Mary had never read either novels or plays. Her occupations in Paris had been so manifold, the leisure for such reading had been wanting; and since then, she had lacked opportunity. This was doubtless owing to a certain mercurial temperament, the result of youth and high health, which sought rather active amusement, than the quiet luxury of romance-reading. For

this reason she had escaped all the pernicious influence, which is ever exercised by such books; and which, like the enchanter's voice calling up spirits from the vasty deep, awakens in the young bosom premature sensibilities, only requiring an object to become passions.

Mary D'Arc never talked of, never thought of, never dreamt of love; and had as much pleasure in the eulogiums passed on her by an old woman, as in the compliments of an accomplished cavalier. She loved ardently both eulogium and compliment. Her whole education had been a sort of net to catch the same; and without any superabundance of vanity, she looked for success with the same *sang froid*, with which the fisher takes up the baited line he has laid. Her feelings were as pure as the dew-drops which rest in the calix of a flower, and like them, all they owned of colour, were reflections from the bright tints which surrounded them.

People wise in that lore which teaches the

bent, the weakness, or the force of the human heart, have ever held, that more influence is exercised over it by those of the same sex than of the opposite; and this for good or for evil, as the case may be. This can be in a measure explained by the circumstance, that it is usually corresponding tastes which draw woman to woman, man to man; and thus a latent inclination is confirmed, which, for want of sympathy, might have languished and died.

Certainly, men do more silly things at the University or in the army, where they are under the immediate influence of their own kind, than elsewhere; while it is a received axiom, that neither father, brother, nor husband ever obtained the same sway over a girl's actions, as a female friend has been known to assume.

A new acquaintance, which Mary D'Arc formed the second winter of her residence in Brighton, offered an example of this; and from her introduction to the Countess San

Steffano, who was an English lady married to a Sicilian nobleman, might be dated a bias, which, though not altogether consonant with her character, gave a colouring to her future existence.

In spite of the mundane character of the education Mary had received, her mind had imbibed nothing of worldliness, beyond the taste for that bright and smiling society, which wealth, kind-heartedness, perhaps vanity, perhaps folly, decidedly idleness—bring together.

It had never occurred to her thoughts, when some lady-like girl would enter into conversation with her, during those interregnums after dinners or ball-suppers, when the mighty giants of society refresh themselves undisturbed by the daughters of earth, to ask herself the question, "Who is this girl? — will it add to my consideration being seen talking with her?—or shall I lose *ton* by seeming in her intimacy?"

The world's corrosion had not as yet rusted impulse into calculation; a calculation by which

little minds oftentimes gain the suffrage of the great; and which shows the stunting power of mixed society over every generous feeling.

Neither did Mary, on any fresh presentation of partners, weigh them in the balance of worldly policy.

She only regarded their personal attractions, their address and their *amabilité*, in the French sense of the word; and thought as little of the lineage or standing of those with whom she made acquaintance, as a child reflects on the huge cane, or the African labourer, as the originators of the *bonbon* it is eating. Lady Leverton shared in this one-sided sight. They looked at people as artists do at pictures, for their own merits, instead of judging of them by the frame in which they are exhibited.

This want of fastidiousness, or exclusiveness, as it was then called, offered much facility to people forcing themselves on their acquaintance, who were not in the original select circle, to which, by the care of the

Countess L——, they had been introduced; and their visiting list was now more distinguished by quantity than quality. The good people of Brighton have ever offered a caricature of that feature of English society, which consists of a hearty scramble into the circle immediately above them.

This is an evil which must exist in a country, where the line of demarcation betwixt noble and commoner, is so faintly marked and imperfectly kept; and at Brighton, where poor nobles, like hungry eagles, are constantly found hovering over some wealthy maiden of the commonalty, and finally mating with her, the conclusion naturally presents itself to the mind of their would-be *confrère*, that if a noble family be not demeaned by intermarriage with a commoner, associating with such can be no evil, where education and refinement may prove them fitting.

This then causes the gap into the privileged enclosure; and while in the country, or even

in London, the passage may be rendered less facile, in Brighton and such places of public resort, the obstruction gives way, a rush is made, and a mixed society is the consequence.

This may be a little aggravated by the *laisser aller* of the nomade tribes which frequent such towns; still it does not disprove the fact, that in this country we see a great deal too much of the presumptive scramble up, the uncourteous thrusting back; in short, too much of all the hideous *tracasserie*, which marks a badly regulated system of society.

Lady Leverton and Mary, in common with those new to general society, and of minds too naturally refined to understand quickly all its baser features, had seen nothing of all this. People had asked for their acquaintance, and they had met their advances half way. They never surmised that in every party they attended, about half of it was composed of those asked from necessity, not choice; while the other moiety consisted of those who conceived

that in accepting the invitation they were conferring a favour, which they would not farther extend by mixing up with the rest of the party; thus placing the poor hostess in the unhappy condition of a cook, who arranging some exquisite compound, has the mortification to see a decided curdle take place, resisting all efforts at amalgamation.

If there ever was a bliss in ignorance, it is assuredly that which shuts the perception to the difference of ranks. There may be—there are great souls who despise the subtle distinction; but lacking that greatness, how much of folly is there in the sagacity which renders one alive to the tiresome fact, that while we should gladly cut one-third of one's acquaintance, another third would as gladly cut us; leaving only one-third on that pleasant neutral ground which is furnished by a parity of tastes and condition.

The Countess San Steffano very soon made

Mary D'Arc feel that as the widow of an English Viscount, Lady Leverton had entered into society very much beneath her. This implicated Mary, to whom her mother left the arrangement of such matters. There was then the "harking back," as sportsmen say; and at nineteen, Mary began already to discover that there were rocks in the fair waters of pleasure, while the suspicion also arose that a few sea-monsters lurked beneath.

The Countess San Steffano was an admirable pilot for any one who embarked on these same seas. In consequence of the death of an only brother, she had become the heiress to a father who had "made his money," as the phrase goes. This wealth had provided her a most amiable and gentlemanly husband, the son of a Sicilian Duke; and thus raising her from "the ranks," gave her a station of which she knew how to make the most. To all those whose acquaintance she desired, she was the

most amiable of women; to all those she wished to avoid, the coldest and most impracticable. The black and white shield could never have raised more dissonance of opinion, than did this two-fold character of the Countess. But she regarded it not; and passed through life most wide awake to its enjoyments. Good eating and good music were her principal passions, and nothing arose to chill them. She was childless; but the loss was not felt with the power which she had of drawing to her side the young and attractive.

Some thought this encouragement of youthful companions was for her own pleasure; others, that it was a politic move to make his home agreeable to the Count; be that as it may, she was never without some lovely girl, as her intimate, to whom she showed all the kindness of an elder sister. Mary felt infinitely flattered by the courteous liking speedily shown to herself, and conceived for the Countess and

her charming husband the greatest affection. Impressed by what appeared to her an extensive knowledge of the world, and fascinated by the lively manner in which she would make it known, Mary did her best to benefit by the Countess's cosmology; never for an instant dreaming that she was acting about as wisely as one, who to study the formation of the soil around geologically, sets about picking up the pavement of a London street to furnish specimens.

All was artificial; an artificial system got up on artificial premises, promoted by stunting all better perceptions. Its aim? That could hardly be defined. It was something of dominion and exaltation. Dominion and exaltation over what? Gossamers and soap-bubbles. Poor Mary! And she could turn from all the beauteous fruits and flowers which this world offers to youth, for th study and admiration of wax-work; faint semblances of life,

which as years pass on must affright her with their faded hideousness. Yet shall we stop to blame her or the gentle Ione, who thus left her child open to the influences of those, who could teach nothing but the art of trifling with the means of happiness, which a gracious power prepares for all its creatures. Let us not blame them, but mount higher the chain of causes. Let us blame the despotic Turk, who drove the Greek girl from her sunny isle, where she might have been a wife and mother, in all the irresponsible character of her country. Let us blame the dissolute *attaché*, who with the indulged feelings of the prodigal, drew into the accountable ranks of European life, the simple inhabitant of a Cossack village. And above all, let us blame the arch cheat, old Jedediah Dark, who with the spoils of his villainy, built up a gentleman, who looked only to the outside shewing of the character, blind to all the

noble and dignified impulses to which human nature tends, and may be directed. Let us not blame Ione, the mistaken, but still the fond and watchful mother.

CHAPTER VII.

"A rogue of canzonets and serenades."

TENNYSON.

"ARE you ever disposed to be ambitious, Mary?" the Countess Steffano asked one day, as they were driving slowly up the Marine Parade, having been sometime in silent and admiring observance of her beautiful and animated companion, as she smiled in graceful courtesy to those who made their passing salutation.

"I think that I should be if I were a man,"

Mary replied, turning to her oracle with an inquiring look in her full dark eyes, which were the only Eastern feature she had gained from her mother. "How can a woman be ambitious, with no male thing belonging to her beyond her dog Pincher?"

"Why, in the affair of marriage, *petite pimbèche*," the Countess said kindly; adding, "Do you ever reflect when flirting with such good-looking nobodies as Captain Bruton, that you are wasting your powers of captivation, perhaps to the repulse of nobler subjects?"

Mary looked a little embarrassed, for the words of the Countess brought to her recollection having danced more than a due number of quadrilles with the officer in question, and she felt it a gentle reproof. She laughed to hide her confusion as she asked:

"Must I then calculate before I amuse myself, Contessa?"

"Decidedly. You must remember that mammas and their dowries do not last for

ever, neither does youth or beauty. The important 'now,' ought to be all in all with you *demoiselles.*"

Here was the first black drop of poison instilled into the heart of Mary; that poison which teaches girls to view the union which a heavenly power has ordained for the happiness of his creatures, as a speculation; that poison which teaches that the charms, the talents, the affections meant to adorn that union, are rather to be used as a trade—a calling—a trick to effect it.

"Now, listen dear Mary," the Countess continued, "for I wish to be awfully impressive. I have began building a castle in your behalf, which you must consolidate. You have often heard us speak of Lord Brandiston; well, he has just arrived in Brighton from Paris, and the Count and I have settled that you are just suited to each other. You, with all your prettinesses and pertnesses. He, with all his

wealth, accomplishments, tolerable good looks, and an earl's coronet, which doubles everything. We have asked him to our *soirée* for to-morrow night. He has brought Pezzotti with him, so we must have a little music before dancing. You know Brandiston is quite a fanatic for music; indeed, he rather bores with it; but this is all the better for you. There is no one so easily caught, either male or female, as those who have hobbies: with kings and queens it is the first stepping-stone for courtiers. You must sing your best to-morrow night, and be as mad for music as Brandiston. In short, Mary, you must think that this is a tide which may never flow again."

And thus the Countess ran on, and Mary listened to the jargon; not as a heroine, declaring that she did not care for coronets, and did not understand the art of catching men, but literally weighing every word of advice,

asking for fresh hints, and thinking how exquisite it would be really to become Countess of Brandiston.

That evening when she pressed her fair cheek on her pillow, a torrent of images crowded on her brain, in which there were white veils and diamond wreathes, opera boxes and travelling chariots, beautiful villas and parks, presentations at courts, and everything exquisite. The only tiresome thing was, that the Earl, who as a matter of course entered into all these scenes, would take the form of Captain Bruton; and finding that, she had then to begin the vision all again. Once—but then she was nearly asleep—a tissue, woven by fancy, gave the outline of a bridal with Captain Bruton in his own person. There was a great deal of love and blushing; a feeling of bestowing perfect happiness, and the promise of receiving it: some merriment with a great deal of economy; and then somehow the mahogany tea-chest in Upper Baker Street

and the horsehair sofa came in the way, and all this dreaming was put an end to by her waking with a start; so she turned, and really fell asleep, thinking what dress she should wear, and what she should sing at the Countess' party on the morrow.

Mary D'Arc had thought and projected so much on the subject of the Earl and his subjugation, that it was with a fluttering heart she followed Lady Leverton into the Countess San Steffano's drawing-rooms; and felt a degree of relief, as she cast a hasty glance around, to see no stranger there; but even while greeting the Countess, the announcement of the Earl of Brandiston and Signor Pezzotti rang in her ears. The Countess gave her fingers a significant pinch, and Mary glided off to the second drawing-room, glad to reconnoitre from a distance her destined captive. An acute feeling of disappointment shot across her, as her eye rested on the figure whom she conceived must be the Earl, as he stood shaking the Countess's

hand with all the vehemence of English cordiality; while a little dark man, who stood behind, contented himself with the profound bows usual to continental courtesy.

Mary felt, with a sort of shutting up of the heart to the desireability of a coronet, that the man whom she was still further induced to believe Lord Brandiston, as he stood now warmly greeting Count San Steffano in his turn, was decidedly vulgar. His light brown hair elaborately curled and oiled, was arranged in the extreme of the mode. His jewelled studs, his chains, all were in bad and ostentatious taste; and as her eye rested on the little modest Signor, who stood bowing most deferentially to all San Steffano was saying to him, she could not help thinking that with his closely cut black hair,—the clearly defined, though shaven, moustache of his upper lip,—his full dark eye, and withal, his black neckcloth, that even this murderous-looking little Italian seemed more gentlemanly.

The fast filling rooms soon hid these objects of her attention from her view; and she was glad to enter into conversation with indifferent people, to get rid of a certain perturbation that pervaded her feelings. It was the first time that Mary had prepared herself for acting with design; it rather jarred on her natural ingenuousness. With all her worldly education, she had been too indulgently cherished, ever to have had cause for dissimulation or manoeuvring; and she never would have lent herself to anything so distasteful to her feelings, had not her guide, whom she considered infallible, prescribed it.

The sound of the piano in the large drawing-room occasioned a movement in the assembled party, and a duet by the Count and Countess was the opening of the little impromptu concert. As if better to hear it, the fierce, Roman looking little man, removing to a distance from the piano, threw himself on a sofa near where Mary was standing. His "*bravas*" and "*divas*" were

all strictly professional, but Mary thought there was somewhat of the affectation of the *maestro* in his approval.

After a short interval the Count came to seek him, and the splendid duet out of Semiramide, sung by the strangers, was the result. Mary forgot everything but the exquisite singing which now met her ears. She even thought that the turquoise buttons, matching the prominent turquoise eyes of the coxcombical *blond*, were less objectionable, as his manly and harmonious voice rang on her ears. She felt that she had never heard anything half so delightful; and with the enthusiasm and emulation which excellence usually excites in the young heart, she gladly acceded to the Count's wish when he came to claim her share of the performance.

The *morceau* selected, "I tuoi frequenti palpiti," was placed on the piano, where the self-elected little *maestro*, who had accompanied the duet, was still seated. He asked the Count in

Italian, whether he should accompany the Signorina. Mary in the same language thanked him affirmatively; and it was no little satisfaction for her to find, that by this arrangement, she could now sing with her back to him of the ringlets, who still stood near, instead of being subject to the glare of his large blue eyes, which rather discomposed her.

The song which Mary had chosen had long been her *cheval de bataille;* but as if warmed into inspiration by what she had heard, and much assisted by the excellence of the accompaniment, and the encouragement it was to hear the whispered "*bravissima*" at any well-executed *colorature*, she that evening excelled herself; and when at length in the concluding cadenza, after a long and well sustained shake, she suddenly dropped *fortissimo*, to the lowest notes of her voice, a murmur of applause burst from every lip. The Countess caught her fondly by the hands, and kissed her forehead; and as the Count led her to a seat, every one

seemed anxious to express some tributary eulogium.

A grand quartett by the Count and Countess, and their two musical friends, finished the concert. The piano was wheeled round; the harp and violencello made their appearance; and, in a few minutes, the Count approached Mary, and introduced to her as the Earl of Brandiston, the swarthy little man she had taken for the Italian professor.

Mary learnt afterwards, that the introduction had been earnestly sought by the Earl; this was so far satisfactory; but, in truth, it was followed up by a course of attentions so marked and unmistakable, that they seemed to render all her projects for his captivation mere works of supererogation. Indeed, Lord Brandiston, to all appearance, sought his fate as blandly as the far-famed ducks, of the as far-famed Mrs. Bond, were expected to do. He actually "came to be killed;" and ere a month was

passed, the probable marriage of Miss D'Arc and the singing Earl was discussed with the *entremets*, and touched upon with the lemonade, at every dinner or evening party given in Brighton.

The Countess San Steffano showed as much satisfaction, as a chess player does at the approaching checkmate which threatens an adversary. Lady Leverton, too, was pleased, though nervous; for she at times saw an unusual frown on her beloved Mary's brow, which seemed to speak some discomfort; thongh her words were still all the light-hearted ebullitions, half reverie, half speech, which usually drop from the lips of happy, thoughtless youth.

And Mary was happy—happy in her success —happy in her prospects; but still at times perplexed and ruffled by a collision with one, who, even whilst seeking her presence with an earnestness which proved it was not lightly

valued, scrupled not to exhibit frequent ill-temper, or to make her sensible that some action of her own was the exciting cause.

Music, which was to have been the connecting tie of the Earl's allegiance to herself, and, in fact, was the first charm which had awakened his admiration, now seemed the very rock on which his love and her advancement should make shipwreck.

Mary's intense love for music, had been for all the prettinesses rather than the solidities of the science; and though her Parisian masters had coaxed and scolded her into much proficiency, still, when released from their *surveillance*, her choice of music had relapsed into a taste for all the wild and sweet national ballads of Naples, Venice, and Spain, to the neglect of the grand opera *scenas* in which she had been instructed.

On her first acquaintance with Lord Brandiston, these very *scenas* had been duly sung, and indeed had proved the means of quickly ripen-

ing that acquaintance into intimacy; and from singing with him *en petit comité* at the Countess San Steffano's, the rehearsing with him in her own home in the morning, became the next and natural step. At first, this was all charming. She sang the music she knew, and received the meed of praise this gained her, with double gusto. Approval was the one great aim of her life; not so much to deserve it probably, as to gain it.

As a child, her nurse had always worked wonders with her, by a little of the unction of flattery; and now it was almost a necessity. Not unamiably so; but those who loved her, felt that a little compliment was to her like the pat on the head to an affectionate dog. It made her eyes sparkle, and called forth some kind demonstration in return. Lord Brandiston's praise was most acceptable; it at once put her in good humour with herself, and seemed to promise that the coronet even now hanging over her brow might soon rest there;

that is, in plain prose, that the Earl would soon make proposals.

All this at first; but the music which she knew was soon exhausted, and his lordship became anxious that she should acquire fresh; and then Pezzotti was called in. The pleasant rehearsals now became serious lessons—sometimes extending to two hours. It was not only her own practice, but in the duets which they sang together, she had to hear the Earl go over the same ground an infinitude of times.

And then dark looks would arise, if, during those *bye-matches* of roulades, she left the piano to gaze a minute from the window on the gay groups walking in the clear sunshine of a bright frosty day, wishing most heartily for the moment of release. And then people would call, and Lord Brandiston would hint the desirableness of being denied; and the Viscountess would show her disposition to accede to his wishes, Mary's little remonstrance being in-

effectual or unheard; while peeping through the blind, she would see drive off, those of her acquaintance she most wished to see.

Then her vexation made her hoarse, and that made Brandiston snappish, and mutter about crows and peacocks; and though in Italian his abuse did not sound so rudely as it might have done in English, still it made her laugh to find any one cross enough to call her names to her face. Laughing was worse than anything; and then the Earl would snatch up his hat, and rush from the room, Lady Leverton looking frightened, and Mary foolish.

In the evening when they met, no reference was made to these little storms. All was homage and attention, and Lady Leverton then thought they might have fancied there was more temper in these exhibitions, than was really experienced. But Mary felt that the ill-humour had been real, and the succeeding smiles adopted as a means of effacing the impression it might have left. It was then misgivings would arise.

Would it be quite happiness to be for ever within reach of such dark ebullitions, even though rank and wealth did their best to make all things smooth? The truth which one's own heart always tells, if asked simply and strictly, seemed rather against the happiness question, but Mary hushed up the answer. It would be time enough to weigh it when the declared intentions of the Earl would render decision necessary. So she went on singing, quarrelling, and letting herself be loved; at times, when some successful rehearsal had made all harmony, almost fancying that the Earl was the only man she ever could like. He was so foreign, so refined, so above all the stable nonsense of steeple chases and Melton Mowbray.

Mary was in this disposition one morning, when the Earl entered. She was writing the answer to a note of invitation at the moment, which she held up to him, saying gaily:

"You are just come in time to laugh over this precious manuscript. Now listen," she

continued, reading in a mocking grandiose style: 'Mrs. Fitzroy Sims requests the honour of Viscountess Leverton's and Miss D'Arc's company on Wednesday next, to a small, early party. As Mrs. Fitzroy Sims expects Lord Brandiston, she trusts that Miss D'Arc will bring—a little music!' A little music!—that is, that Miss D'Arc and Lord Brandiston will amuse Mrs. Fitzroy Sims's vulgar friends. Could there be anything done in worse taste? There, Mrs. Fitzroy Sims," she added, hastily scribbling a short note.

"May I see how you have diplomatized the 'little music' affair?" Lord Brandiston asked, as he took the note from her, before she folded it. "It certainly would have been better to have sent that request in a second note, after ascertaining that you accepted the invitation. But have you refused it?" he asked sharply, as he read the note, and slightly colouring added, "Did you not understand that I was going?"

"Oh! yes," Mary answered carelessly, scarcely

seeing the extent of his question. "But mamma told me to decline the invitation. The Countess said that there will not be a decent soul there!"

"I am not competent to judge how far the Countess San Steffano's estimate of a soul's decency is correct," Lord Brandiston said, somewhat proudly, "I only know that I am going—and Pezzotti says that he and the Ronzi de Begnis are to be there; and those singing girls who are just come to Brighton. Come, *carina*," he added playfully, and almost affectionately, "I will answer the note for you; and then we will practice something to astonish the Fitzroy Sims," and as he spoke he wrote the acceptation of the invitation.

Mary felt embarrassed. In spite of the influence, which the Earl's positive manner, and evident dislike to contradiction, held over her usual independent will, she experienced a spoilt child's annoyance at his thus presuming to dictate; and inwardly resented his interference,

however flattering the cause might be to herself. Still she scarcely knew how to maintain the Viscountess's and her own intention not to attend this party, without an altercation, to which her natural gentleness of disposition, besides her good-breeding, rendered her peculiarly averse. At length she said mildly:

"I do not think we can go to this party. It is in a set we do not wish to visit; and we have another engagement, a ball at Lady John Harford's."

"Oh! that makes no difficulty," Lord Brandiston answered rather sullenly. "Mrs. Sims's party is early, and eleven will be quite soon enough to go to Lady John's. I am also going there. Come Mary," he added, kindly, "you must not let the finery of the Countess San Steffano interfere with my pleasure."

These latter words were meant to be said persuasively and affectionately; but there was a dark flashing eye, which showed that anger,

more than sorrow, would be caused by further opposition.

Mary was in difficulty; but, like all cowards, referred to another what was, in fact, her own determination; and, saying she would ask her mother, left the room for the purpose of seeking her; taking care in the short interval to beg her to remain firm in their resolve, not to go to Mrs. Sims's party.

Lady Leverton could hardly account for her daughter's perturbation of manner; but, on entering the drawing-room, saw at once that there was more at stake than the mere uncertainty, whether a vulgar party should be attended or not; and by the firm-set mouth of Lord Brandiston, felt that Mary's empire could scarcely change his resolve, whatever it might be.

The question was put to her, whether she would not oblige him by attending Mrs. Sims's party. Alas! for the firmness of Mary's ally. So perfectly unusual was Lady Leverton to

dictate anything to her child, that it was difficult even to make a show of taking the reins of government into her own hands; so that she inadvertently answered, that although she certainly disliked the idea of going to Mrs. Fitzroy Sims, Mary might do as she pleased. She evidently thought that the politeness of Lord Brandiston could urge nothing further. But his look of triumph undeceived her, as turning to Mary, he said:

"Then you will go?"

It was now Mary's turn to persevere; and she felt wretchedly out of humour as she said:

"Indeed I cannot. First of all, I dislike extremely being asked so unceremoniously by a comparative stranger, to assist in the amusements of people with whom I have no intimacy. Besides this," she added, with an attempt at playfulness, though her flushed cheek showed there were serious feelings in action, "I cannot go all gauze and pink roses into dirty little

rooms on the Steine, and then come out like a rumpled chimney-sweep at Lady John's, to my indelible disgrace."

Lord Brandiston's countenance darkened as she spoke; but he too affected carelessness, as he said, taking his hat:

"Alors, c'est une affaire arrêtée. Can I do anything in town for you, Lady Leverton? I shall be off after luncheon, and leave Pezzotti to make my other adieux."

Saying this, he presented his hand to the Viscountess, made a low bow to Mary, and passed hastily from the room.

Mary was paralyzed, and Lady Leverton scarcely less so; while she felt deeply grieved at seeing the hurt expression of her daughter's lovely countenance. Two large tear-drops stood in each eye, but she spoke not, and quietly sealed and directed the note to Mrs. Fitzroy Sims, the direful spring of all these woes.

The Viscountess saw by this action that

nothing conciliatory was contemplated as regarded Lord Brandiston, and rather applauded the firmness which resented so ill-concealed an attempt at tyranny.

She rang the bell for the servant to take the note, recommending Mary at the same time to send and ask the Countess San Steffano to take her a drive. This was inspired by the kind tact of the mother. It at once dispelled the emotion and indignation of the fair young creature, who, for the first time in her life, had encountered unkindness. She felt that she must exert herself to tell the tale to the Countess, and to guard most sedulously against the plaintiveness and demeanour of a *délaissée*.

The world inflicts its wounds, but the world sees to the healing; and in nine cases out of ten is more prompt than solitude, with all its holy influences and soothings. In the country after such a *fracas* with one the heart had nearly taught itself to love, that same heart,

faint and chilled, would have buried itself in still further quiet to pore over broken hopes, and all which they had promised. Mary D'Arc did nothing of this. The Countess came for her at the appointed hour, and found her with her prettiest bonnet ready to spring into the britscha. The story of the quarrel was told; perhaps with a little exaggeration, to make the Countess smile, and look less grave at this overthrow of the prospering scheme. As it was, she persisted in thinking that Mary might have preserved peace; and that too, at a less cost, than that of experimentalizing on all the enormities of Mrs. Fitzroy Sims's "small early party." Still all was merriment. The cliffs were crowded with good-looking people, and the day was as bright and smiling as all those who rejoiced in its happy influence.

The next evening Mary found herself entering Lady John Harford's ball-room without the least particle of woe, caused by that most

dismal of recollections, the having lost a lover. No one could have guessed the fact; but Captain Bruton, whose star of late had been anything but in the ascendancy, seemed to feel, with the swiftness of that most subtle of all powers—a lover's instinct—that there was a fair and open field for him that night.

With a tremulous ardour, a manly devotion that perhaps had never shown to greater advantage to one, whose naturally open disposition had been chilled and restrained by the cold yet sensitive, the deferential yet tyrannical character of Lord Brandiston, the handsome soldier made a greater inroad into the favour of Mary than she was aware of.

They had already danced two sets of quadrilles together, and had commenced a waltz, in which however they had been obliged to pause, owing to the awkward crowding of two couples near them. They were standing in the waltzing position, which probably was as felicitous to Captain Bruton as the movement.

Mary's pretty foot was just pointed to recommence, when her sudden start occasioned Captain Bruton to look in the direction to which her astonished gaze was turned; and there, in the doorway immediately before them, stood the Earl of Brandiston. Involuntarily Mary withdrew her hand which had rested so passively on the brawny shoulder of the lancer. The movement was not lost on him, and he bit his lip as he perceived the emotion which the unexpected apparition had produced. She next gently disengaged herself from his hand, which still clasped her waist; and, as if forgetting his claims as a partner, thought only of greeting Lord Brandiston who in one minute was at her side. She was unaffectedly cordial; and felt really happy to find by his manner that she had not irrevocably offended. Her share of the quarrel, and right to feel aggrieved, had long passed from her placable mind.

"I thought you were in London," she said, her bright eyes beaming with pleasure to find

she was mistaken. He told her that he had just returned from thence, proposing at the same time to lead her to her mother. She took his offered arm, and apologising to Captain Bruton for not continuing their waltz, passed into the adjoining room.

All was surprise and pleasure with Lady Leverton and the Countess, who were sitting together. There is something strangely inspiriting in the kindness and good-humour of those, who we feel might have treated us coldly, and that not unjustly. The Earl felt enthusiastically happy; and his heart which had long been susceptible of the loveliness and grace of Mary, discarded at once the caution and coldness which usually kept watch over it.

On returning to her mother's side, after dancing a quadrille with the Earl, Mary whispered in an excited, happy voice, that he had asked her to marry him, and wished now to make his proposals known, in preference to the formality and awfulness of a regular interview on the morrow.

The still beautiful eyes of the Viscountess sparkled with joy. Her beloved child, then, had found a protector for years to come; and the wealth and consideration so grateful to her feelings was then to be secured to her. She forgot all the many faults she had perceived in the Earl, from the satisfaction she now felt at the proof he gave of his devotion to her child; and taking his offered arm, she willingly accompanied him to a boudoir set apart for *écarté*, telling Mary that she would send the Countess to take care of her. But they had scarcely turned away, when Captain Bruton seated himself abruptly by her side.

The suddenness of his appearance, no less than his changed aspect, gave her a feeling of surprise almost amounting to alarm; but she said calmly:

"I fancied you were gone, Captain Bruton."

"Did you look for me?" he asked in a tone so hollow, it struck a chill on her heart; but she attempted to answer gaily, saying:

"Oh, no, I have looked for no one, and yet I think I know exactly who are here."

"I have looked at no one but yourself this last hour, and an encouraging sight I have found it," he said, bitterly; adding, as he pointed to one of the windows which opened to the balcony; "There is my watch-tower."

This accounted for his pale and chilled features, and the disorder in which his hair hung over his forehead; and Mary then guessed from his words, he had taken that post to watch herself. She knew not how to reply. Any trifling remark she felt would be mistimed; and yet she feared to shew by serious words the interest and grief his wretched appearance caused her. There was a minute's silence; but the awkwardness of the pause seemed unremarked by Captain Bruton, who sat with his elbows on his knees and his head bent so low, that the feather of his shako, which he held with both hands, almost concealed his face from the furtive glance which

Mary cast towards him. He was deep in thought. At last, without raising his head, he said in a low, agonized voice:

"Miss D'Arc, I give you my sacred word, I would die rather than hurt or offend you; and yet—and yet, I must say that which may do both. I love you with the deepest love man ever gave to woman. I know it is wrong to tell you this so abruptly; I know that I risk losing even your good opinion by this unfeeling haste; still I must speak, or another minute may be too late. Miss D'Arc," he continued rapidly, and yet with a choking voice, "I am a poor man, and I know all the wealth and splendour of this world might be given for your love. Still, poor as I am, if you will take me, my whole life shall be given to make you happy. Do not answer me now," he said, seeing Mary attempted to speak. "Pray do not. I know that I am wrong; but I have dared to speak to you in this sudden, unmanly way, because I feel that

what I have said to you, may in a few minutes be said to you by another; but promise me—I beseech you to promise me, not to accept Lord Brandiston until you have seen me again."

The agitation of Captain Bruton in a measure imparted itself to Mary. She scarcely knew what to say; and yet, aware that in a few instants the Countess would join her, she felt that he ought at once to know his fate. With a faultering voice she said:

"Captain Bruton, I am very sorry—that is —I am not sorry, and I hope you will not mind it very much,—but I have accepted Lord Brandiston's proposal."

This disclosure must have cost Mary an effort, for she shivered her slight ivory fan to pieces as she spoke. She stooped to pick up the fragments, glad at the moment of any pretext to hide her burning blushes. When she again raised her head, Captain Bruton had left her side. Her eyes followed his lofty and noble figure, as he strode towards the door.

Arrived there, he turned for one short minute; and the lost and woe-begone expression of his fine countenance struck sorrow to her heart. He gave her one long, loving look, and disappeared.

That look, the recollection of his agitated words, which with all their unstudied bluntness spoke so forcibly to her heart, haunted her every thought, and mingled with every dream that night. She had even felt relieved when her mother kissed her, and bade her good night; for then her overcharged heart at once gave way, and she wept long and bitterly.

Ah! Lord Brandiston! are these burning tears good augury for you? Prize well your rank—prize well your wealth—for their sake a heart's worship had been rejected, which an empress might have coveted.

Mary D'Arc and Algernon Bruton never met again in this world. He exchanged into a regiment going to India. He married there. He

died there. What his or her fate might have proved, had the Earl of Brandiston not returned to Brighton so suddenly, it avails not to guess. The likelihood of happiness befalling two, between whom a sentiment has sprung up spontaneously, not forced or fostered by foreign aid, and whose youth, beauty, and glad-heartedness are equal, warrants a significant "perhaps;" but how seldom in the ranks of life above the working classes, do the charms of mind, person, or heart—those bright gifts of humanity—weigh in the unions we see daily forming around us. Position is everything; and the natural adjuncts of love are unconsidered. For position, Mary D'Arc cast away the very creature a romance writer would have bade her love. Nature also would have so ordered it, and would have made itself felt; but the world—that cold, calculating, toy-ridden, heart-smothering, pigment-worshipping world — had decreed otherwise.

There was nothing of martyrdom in this.

Like the fakeers of the East, who combat nature so long that torture itself becomes normal, the feelings of her, who looks to the world for their gratification, soon find its dictates consonant. Mary did more, and prepared to fulfil her engagement with Lord Brandiston with sentiments as near to love, as a pure-minded and affectionate girl of nineteen could bring to the bidding.

A French sermon tells that "Le désir excessif de plaire est toujours dangereux, rarement innocent, et qu'il est bien difficile de donner beaucoup de sentiments sans en prendre soi-même." Mary did not read sermons, and the lesson never had reached her, that there was aught to blame in the battery of prettinesses and coquetry which she had brought against Captain Bruton or the Earl; but in the case of the latter its verity was nevertheless experienced. In exciting a sentiment, a sentiment was awakened. Perhaps it was well that it was so—well, that besides the brilliancy of

the marriage she was prepared to make, there was that degree of attachment, which might induce her to look with indulgence on the exacting and easily ruffled temper of her affianced husband.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Si vous voulez que l'on vous aime,
Petite, il faut aimer vous-même.
Un peu d'amour nourrit l'amour,
Petite!"

THE marriage of Lord Brandiston with Mary D'Arc was not to take place until the end of July. The delay was unavoidable. For, with the best intentions of hurrying the settlements, both Mr. Joblyn and the Earl's solicitor found that certain properties falling to the lot of a Baron Brandiston, whenever he might be born, required a clearer specification than had, for the lapse of many years, been effected, seeing that

the Barony and Earldom were united in the person of the present Lord Brandiston, who was the posthumous son of the late Earl, and who in his turn had inherited both from an elder brother.

However, in spite of the lingering of lawyers, time went on happily and smoothly; and at the beginning of May, Lady Leverton removed to London as well for the purpose of Mary continuing her singing lessons with Signor Pezzotti, who had an engagement at the Opera House, as to enable her to see more of her intended; while the essential business of the wedding wardrobe was in full progress.

The Countess San Steffano, who lived in Hanover Square, had secured a small house in Brook Street, that they might be near her; and in consequence they spent much of their time together. Mary found a thousand delights in her new position; and there was a certain *éclat* and interest attending it, that precluded the faintest wish for the flight of time, or any

impatience that there should still arise impediments to the final act of this love drama.

Although it was an acknowledged rule in étiquette, that during this interregnum before her marriage, Miss D'Arc should attend no parties, except family gatherings, or meetings strictly private, the Countess San Steffano warmly contested the propriety of this seclusion; and Mary, whose heart and feelings were not so absorbed in her matrimonial prospects as is usual with young ladies, or at least as they are supposed to be, felt that now was of all others the time for partaking in the pleasures which the height of the London season afforded. The Countess had a second reason in snatching the *fiancée* from the dullness to which her mother and lover were disposed to condemn her. She felt a sort of reflected consequence in the chaperonage of the embryo Countess, and found her own visiting list increased by the circumstance; while the interest every one manifested in her charge, gave that

excitement, which the lover-less and daughter-less find wanting in the most brilliant assemblies.

To Mary there was no remoter cause for her availing herself of the means afforded by the Countess of visiting every gay assembly in town, than the pure and unalloyed thirst of pleasure—a thirst which, like most animal wants, increased with that it fed upon. Indeed, that which some months before had been simply satisfaction in the effect her graceful loveliness always produced, had now by indulgence been matured into an habitual looking for of admiration; and, like all those who indulge in intoxicating potations, she felt a restlessness and *ennui* when the opportunity was wanting for the exercise of her powers of attraction.

Lord Brandiston appeared, or at least tried to appear, to share in the gratification which her unprecedented success afforded to all those who loved the light-hearted Mary; and when

told by the Countess that this indulgence in London dissipations would render her less disposed towards them for the future, he attempted so to reconcile his mind, and to believe that he was in fact the happy man of which all London took great pains to convince him. But there was some demon of incredulity lurked within; and the Earl felt that the character of happy would have attached much better to him, had Miss D'Arc been content to have sang all the morning with himself and Pezzotti, taking the Tuesday and Saturday's opera for her sole amusement. This was sometimes whispered to her; but smiles charmed away the reproach implied, and a morning's strict practice seemed to make all things smooth. The evening assembly could not be given up; and there was so much pretty pouting at the bare idea, that Lord Brandiston felt himself almost the barbarian he was declared to be, to venture to urge it further.

Perhaps no one has a right to pass censure

on the unreasonableness of the bride elect, who has not resisted the same force of temptation which assailed her. Beautiful without conceit —graceful without affectation—dignified yet at once cordial and *caressante* in her manners —she was watched and welcomed wherever she went, with an earnestness full of the most subtle flattery for the young heart; a flattery which neither station, age, nor sex, refused to offer her. The great people sought introductions, glad that the fervour which led them, in common with others, to form her acquaintance, necessitated no stepping down; and that they could be condescending without cost, the object of their courtesy being so soon to claim a legitimate *entrée* into their ranks. Little people clamoured for an introduction to her, rejoicing that compliance with the mania of the day was, in fact, securing an acquaintance of distinction for the future. Old men delighted to talk with her, and gaze on her loveliness, and chuckle at the idea of the many young

fellows who were envying them. Young men hovered around her, with the same recklessness a moth dashes at a candle; and writhed and burnt within the influence of her sweet, loving eyes, and gentle vivacity, with the same helplessness that keeps the insect in the boiling wax.

Women came equally within the circle of her enchantment. There was a pretty affectionate familiarity in her manners towards them, arising from kind and sociable feelings which had never yet met rebuff—a sort of coquetry adapted to females, that was at once novel and attractive. Girls, in the charm of her warm-heartedness, forgot to be jealous either of her beauty or her conquests, particularly as she herself seemed to think so lightly of them. While some more worldly thought, like experienced fishers, it were perhaps better to throw a line where one genuine May-fly had drawn together the object of their pursuit, than to fish in deserted waters. All this unanimity in admiration is explained by

the fact, that human nature—at any rate English nature—does everything in mobs. Preachers, players, pictures, are all admired in mobs. Beauties or books, senators or singers, all have their mobs. Without further alliteration, it may be said that on all it is the mob which passes the stamp of merit. And who is the man that would extol or admire, single-handed? There is not an Englishman who dares, or can do it; or if he did, dare own it. If an opinion of some preacher is asked, you are supposed to be sufficiently answered by being told that his chapel is always filled to overflowing. The mob is the voucher for his excellence. If you ask which is the best actor, Sims or Tims? you are told that you cannot get a box at the house Sims plays at; which means that the mob gives the preference to Sims, and so must you. You are told that you must go and see such a picture; no particular excellence is mentioned, but the all conclusive one, that 'every one goes to see it.' Mob here sets up for *conoscenti*.

The number of her partners—the number of its editions—speaks for the merit of book or beauty; mob is the evident umpire. In short, it is all decided by mob. And when, under the influence of some atmospheric pressure, or other cause equally unseen, people turn schismatics or chartists, the only reason they can allege for the step is, the example of the mob. People live and love, sin and pray, study and trifle, do all things in a mob; and the gregarious propensity is never more strongly developed than in devotion to her, who by convention is technically called the "Belle of the season."

Mary partook to the full of this mob-worship; and, though it has been shared by pastry-cook girls, singing Africans, and American dwarfs, still, in itself, it is of a nature so conducive to good-temper, no one quarrels with it because of unworthy compeers. To Mary, gentle and affectionate, which, in spite of a craving vanity, she really was, the gaining so perfectly all suffrages was a felicity of which each day

feel more keenly the absence of
inspiring evidences. However, sl
for doubting her success. Her
loveliness—her every action gra
word sparkling with wit—and
liarities adopted as badges of *b*
the custom with idolaters to dre
with pearls and point lace, or
magnificence, so did the London
to Mary high birth and ancient
the patrician standing which
spent one hundred and fifty thou
establish, was now awarded to her
consideration of a Parisian *con*
engagement to Lord Brandiston.

was, that Miss Leverton D'Arc, as her father had arranged she should be called, was the last of that branch of the ancient and honourable family of Leverton, a member of which, high in command in the famous battle against the Maid of Orleans, had received, in consideration of great valour, a grant of money, and the name of D'Arc, in addition to his own, from the Protector. Her high bearing, it was alleged, bore testimony to her high descent; and no one could see the dignified composure that she maintained in situations which, from their very distinction, would prove embarrassing to others, without regarding it as a proof of her pure aristocratic origin.

Blind mob! Precisely that same calm, collected manner, that same proud modesty, which lent no ears to the murmurs of adulation around, was exhibited by Nanny Prodgers, the paternal grandmother of Miss D'Arc, when, as barmaid at the New London Inn at Exeter, she dispensed pipes and tobacco to a crowd of

enamoured bag-men in the "traveller's room." It was from that same New London Inn that Jedediah Dark, then an attorney's clerk, had wooed and won her; and the circumstance is only mentioned, to prove how a London world may deceive itself. But after all, Mary D'Arc and her ancestress Nanny Prodgers owned what is, perhaps, the best and truest nobility—the nobility of nature; the patent of which, in both cases, is very perfection of beauty, an upright heart, unstirred passions, and a consciousness, not conceit, of individual worth.

Amidst the revolving hours which shone with such glad lustre for the happy Mary, there were some, however, which in her opinion were most direfully sombre. Those spent in her singing lessons with Pezzotti took decidedly that tint; and were in fact composed of minutes of discomfort and vexation. At Brighton, when he had first commenced his instructions, he had complimented her on her beautiful contralto;

and had given her songs for that tone. Since their arrival in London he had revoked that first opinion; and pronouncing her voice a soprano, had given her music, in spite of her remonstrance, infinitely above the compass of her voice. This rendered her singing lessons a tax at once upon her patience and musical taste. She felt how ill she executed each beautiful composition; and the Earl was not slow in pointing out her failures. In vain she protested against the judgment on her voice; Lord Brandiston, doubtless biassed by the Signor, concurred in his opinion of it; attributing, with a significant manner, her present imperfections to the little time she devoted to practice. And so poor Mary went on, screaming some of Rossini's highest *scenas*, until her former taste for music became almost aversion. This was not the only trial which her lover imposed on her. Every Monday night he had a musical meeting at his own house in Grosvenor Square, at which the Viscountess and her daughter were expected to

preside. There could be no reason urged against it, as some of the Earl's relations made a point of attending; thus making them family meetings.

There were always present his two aunts, the Ladies Honoria and Sophia Eccles, two very thin old maids, whose liking for their nephew's music seemed a pious homage paid to the memory of their departed sister, his mother. There was the Honorable General Brandiston and his wife, who were as constant in their attendance; but, seeing that the General slept soundly during the musical portion of the evening's amusement, awaking only to take his place at the sumptuous repast which always concluded it, we may justly imagine that this was the most satisfactory part of the entertainment.

There was still another cousin present, Beau Brandiston, or Blind Brandiston, as he was sometimes called. He was an exquisite of sixty, whose whole life had been spent in waiting for a situation under Government; and thus to lose

life seemed literally all the use he wished to make of it. It is a question whether the actual post of Lord Chamberlain would have given him half the contentment which he enjoyed from haunting the club-houses, and prognosticating the fall of adverse ministries, and the formation of precisely the one which would see his merits, and avail itself of them.

There was still another pursuit by which he amused the interregnum of his taking office. This was, by the aid of a magnificent gold eye-glass, fathoming and bringing to light the hidden mysteries of the toilettes of all the females of his acquaintance. He knew to a nicety all those who had artificial teeth, and in which tier, as he called it, these false pearls were set. He could point out irrefragable proofs of the existence of *rouge*, and detect the *postiche* head-dresses of any female present. He would stand behind young ladies as they ranged in the dance, and, winking quickly at the young men who stood near, would betoken by that significant gesture

whose spines or shoulders were not quite "regulation." All this was done with an unerring discrimination, which, applied to things of office, must have gained him distinction.

Besides these branches of the Brandiston family, there were some indescribable people—chiefly acquaintance which the Earl had formed abroad; and who clung, with the tenacity of limpets to a rock, to their titled friend. He cared as little about them, or their position in life, as the rock might have prized the mollusca of the true class. But they formed an audience; and every one who knows a melomaniac, must know also what an essential an audience is to such.

Brandiston might possibly not have found among his compeers those who, for the sake of an elegant banquet in an Earl's house, would have undergone the task of listening to the host's musical compositions for two hours; therefore he welcomed those who would. But it was precisely these people, and rather a large number

of "professionals," which made the meetings at Brandiston House so odious to his bride elect. She felt debased by their acquaintance, and the fulsome flatteries they uttered on her own and the Earl's performances. She could have borne the oft-repeated rehearsal of his Oratorio, which Brandiston was perfecting, in the fond hope of bringing it out at the Hanover Square Rooms. She could have borne the two solos which fell to her lot, besides her share of the choruses; though they were pitched so high, the singing them used to make her cheeks burn and her feet cold. But the being mixed up with these people she hardly could bear, particularly as the Countess San Steffano, after two evenings, declared them insufferable; adding that Mary must do her best to eradicate them after her marriage.

Mary thought so too; but it is not agreeable to be brought into intimacy with those, whose acquaintance you are making devices to escape; and she wondered how it was, that, while at the

routs of the Mrs. Smiths, the Mrs. Browns, the Mrs. Jones, and other Mrs. Nobodies, she met all the cream of the London world, one by birth and station borne to command the best society, seemed so content to mix with those so decidedly his inferiors. Poor Mary! she had yet to learn that a hobby of any kind is the most equalizing circumstance in the world.

The passion for any art renders praise almost a necessity; and people rarely find flatterers in the same rank of life as themselves. They must stoop for the indulgence. The Earl did so. And in consequence, the drawing-rooms of Brandiston House were filled with those whose sole recommendation was knowing how to listen and applaud.

And thus time went on; these Monday evenings with the Oratorio, the performers, and audience, assuming the form of a hideous nightmare to her, who was soon to be one with him whose choicest amusement she despised. At

what age do the blind kittens of the world receive their eye-sight?

Among those constantly to be encountered at these dreaded *réunions*, the only one among them whom Mary could actually tolerate, besides poor little Mrs. Brandiston,—who, after she had related the one history of the one baby she once had, who lived one year and died one day, had nothing more to say,—was Anna Pezzotti, a pretty fat Milanese, with turquoise eyes like her brother, but with a fund of good temper that made their wide stare one continued gleam of kindness. And she was kind; at least, Miss D'Arc found her so.

Frequently she had volunteered to take her solos in the one eternal oratorio; and with her beautiful clear soprano she executed them so exquisitely, as to at once charm Miss D'Arc, and put the Earl into a perfect tremor of gratified genius. This was satisfactory. And she was always so modest when commended, and asserted with such pretty ingenuousness

that she only attempted them because she saw singing was irksome to Miss D'Arc that evening, who would have executed them so much better, that Mary became quite attached to her; while the Earl used to exhibit ineffable complacency, when, rather closing her large blue eyes, as if in ecstasy, she would run through a series of eulogiums uttered in the pretty exaggeration of the Italian language, which lends so strange a force to praise or abuse.

Though the Italian evinced so keen a sense of the beauty of scientific compositions—and those of Brandiston had scarcely anything else to recommend them—when *tête-à-tête* with Mary she would join with amiable facility in preferring a little simple *barcarole* to all the grand *scenas* in which, by the *exigeance* of her brother, they were obliged to assist; and, with an amusing playfulness, she would at such times rather elicit some contumacious opinions regarding the oratorio:—opinions, which Mary would afterwards regret having uttered; for she

fancied that, owing to some indiscreet gossipping on the part of the Signora Anna with her brother, or others, the Earl generally became acquainted with her heretical notions.

Still, Mary liked the lively girl better than all the rest of the Italians, observing that she kept much aloof from them; and that, with a modesty and graceful deference which in itself was quite touching, she associated herself chiefly with the Ladies Eccles and herself. By her means, and her light and merry talk, many a moment of *ennui* was lightened; and, what was more, when a certain pride in Mary's disposition was aroused by finding her mother and herself mixed up with all these eating and drinking Italians, she with much tact would shew her perception of the annoyance, and try to check the familiarity which the habit of meeting constantly produced in the manners of her compatriots.

If this failed, she would attempt to lighten the anomaly of their being thus mixed up with the Earl's friends by turning it into a jest; and

attributing to it its rightful cause—his all-absorbing passion for music, above all for his own compositions—would seriously recommend Miss D'Arc to throw some opposition to an inclination which led to sacrifices both of time and taste.

This was done too delicately for Mary to feel the advice presumptuous; and it was so kindly and, as it were, disinterestedly offered, that she felt a pleasure in assuring the Pezzotti that she had made up her mind to undermine this encroaching mania. In truth it had become a care and vexation to Mary, and caused her occasionally to look at her marriage prospects with a somewhat modified happiness. This probably blinded her to the impropriety of investing so much confidence in a stranger; but there was also a fascination in the manner with which Signora Anna seemed to make common cause with her that won these admissions from her.

The gay scenes in which she was so constantly mixed, made Mary partially forget all this; but the

ever recurring Monday evening music parties never failed to call up her causes for dissatisfaction in bold relief; and she at length began to feel a depressing sensation whenever she entered the large old drawing-rooms of Brandiston House.

In truth there was nothing very enlivening in their aspect. They had been furnished by the late Countess, just when the first importation of designs from Herculaneum became rife in England. All was classical; but of that *mesquin* wretched style of the age. Here were pea-green silk curtains with Etruscan borders, as cold and as scanty as the hottest Italian citizen could have desired; slight ricketty Grecian sofas, stools and fire screens, satin-wood work and card-tables, skeleton book-stands, all with a smack of Herculaneum; in short, the very questionable taste of a provincial Italian city of nearly 2,000 years ago, blended with the unquestionable bad taste of a London upholsterer;

who, with a mind imbued with some of Hope's designs, and some frescoes imported from Naples, adapted the light, airy fittings up of a summer pleasure-house in the fortieth latitude, to the substantial state-apartments of a house built in the reign of Queen Anne in cold, smoky London. The only handsome features in the drawing-rooms were superb marble chimney-pieces, elaborately carved door-cases and window-frames, and a beautiful painted ceiling in Thornhill's best style. Mary little thought, as she often sat examining the curious Olympian scene which the painter had traced, where gods and goddesses, doves and eagles, sea-horses and peacocks, thunder-bolts and wine-cups, were mingled together in strange mythological confusion, of what much greater effects this ceiling was to be the cause.

She had been amusing herself one evening, during some of the long chorusses of the oratorio, with furnishing in idea these splendid rooms

in a style more in keeping with their original magnificence — consigning with imaginary triumph all the gimcrack imitations of the relics of the disinterred city, to the housekeeper's and steward's room — when Lord Brandiston approached her, with rather more animation than he had been wont of late to exhibit when addressing her. It appeared that the fat *basso cantante*, probably for want of something better to say, had suggested the necessity of a domed ceiling as an essential to good music, recommending at the same time the erection of a permanent and raised orchestra.

To hear Lord Brandiston enter at once into this wild plan, and talk quietly of the work of destruction, was more than the equanimity of Mary could bear. She therefore rather warmly protested against the contemplated sacrilege of arching the roof; by which, not only the splendid ceiling must be irrevocably destroyed,

but the state bed-chamber above, entirely done away with. Perhaps it was with some little pettishness that she added, that it was most unwise to listen to a man, who had evidently not an idea beyond an opera buffa and a concert-room. She turned to Anna Pezzotti, who sat near her, for support to her words; but, to her surprise, she who never before differed in opinion, and who perhaps had before said as much, now sided most decidedly, though deferentially, with the Earl.

"Do you not think," she continued, addressing Mary, but with her large blue eyes fixed with expressive softness on Lord Brandiston, "do you not see it necessary, that one who excels so completely as a composer, as well as performer, should have every advantage which can be commanded? There is not a *Maestro* on the continent, who would hesitate a minute in having the alterations effected, which Signor Gabussi recommends. Why then should Lord

Brandiston be expected to consider a silly picture of naked men and women, more than a fitting concert-room for the performances of his divine compositions?"

In other circumstances Mary would have laughed at this adulation of a person who, together with his musical pretensions, the Signora had not scrupled at times to quizz rather unmercifully; but there was a barefaced flattery in her present words which much conduced to the anger now rising within Mary's bosom. She scarcely knew how to reply; and indeed felt too annoyed to do so temperately; but, after a moment's pause, remarked, as calmly as a throbbing heart would allow, that an English peer had claims and duties of which a young Italian lady, educated for the stage, perhaps was not aware; and who seemed to think there was no higher example for him to take, than that of musical professors—men whose services could be hired and paid for. The Earl's

dark eye flashed at her words. He muttered something about the indifference of a dissipated English girl to every one's pleasure but her own; and that she might take a lesson from an Italian girl's kindness, if not from her judgement. These words were not sufficiently articulated to claim a reply, so Mary attempted none; and the Earl turned away, but with a deep and portentous frown on his brow.

There would have been a very awkward pause, but that at this moment Signor Pezzotti approached his sister, to ask her to sing with him a duet, ostensibly of Lord Brandiston's composition, but so embellished by himself, that its identity could hardly be realized. She made some little demur. She said, in an audible whisper, that she was afraid, from having spoken too much from impulse, she might have offended Lord Brandiston by expressing opinions he had not required;—that this idea made her much too unhappy for her to be able

to sing, unless his Lordship would show his forgiveness by singing the duet in question with her.

This was done; and performed so exquisitely by Signora Anna and the Earl, that a general and enthusiastic encore was the consequence. Even Mary forgot the recent *fracas*, while she listened to the plaintive tones of the Italian girl, as she breathed forth notes and words full of the most touching expression. When Lord Brandiston handed the Viscountess to her carriage—which was the first opportunity he had given Mary of speaking to him since their altercation—to make a sort of *amende honorable*, she uttered the warmest and heart-felt eulogiums on the beautiful duet. But the Earl received them coldly; and Mary felt that she had indeed deeply offended.

CHAPTER XI.

"Son qual reo, che in carcere,
La sua sentenza di sapere affrettasi,
Ma sul punto d'averla il cor gli palpita."

GOLDONI.

A FÊTE at Twickenham, which occupied the whole of the next day—a day spent in all the merry variations of rowing, dancing, acting, and eating—put all the vexations of the preceding evening out of the thoughts of Mary; and she alike forgot the contemplated ejectment of all Thornhill's gods and goddesses, and her own

contest with the Earl. On her return to London at the close of the day, she felt too much fatigued to think of going to the Opera, where it had been arranged that the Viscountess and herself should meet Lord Brandiston; but the next morning she wrote a kind little note explaining the cause of their absence, and her hope that they should meet that evening at the Countess San Steffano's, who gave her last ball for that season.

The Earl was from home, so her messenger had returned without an answer. None reached her during the day; and when dancing the cotillion at the end of the ball, Mary recollected that he had not been there during the evening; she felt, with something like a panic, that she must really be in deep disgrace.

Although that passionate love was wanting which is supposed to influence all matrimonial experiments, Mary had schooled her heart—or thought that she had schooled it—into feeling

much affection for the Earl; and she retired to rest that night with feelings of unhappiness, a little remorse, and a great many plans for the next day, by which Lord Brandiston was to be put into good humour.

Mary had always dissuaded her mother from offering any attention to the Pezzotti family, on the score, that, much as it might please the Earl, who had evidently great regard for the Signor Matteo, it would be inconsistent in their present position, and encourage an intimacy which it would be her study after her marriage to interrupt. Such was, however, now the state of things, that Mary resolved, in the exigency of the moment, to entreat the Viscountess the next morning, to ask Anna Pezzotti and her brother to dinner to meet the Earl. This would be making up her quarrel with the Signora; and, by devoting the evening to his best performances and compositions, she might perhaps appease Lord Brandiston. With this flattering belief Mary

tried to close her tearful eyes in sleep. But it was long ere she could shut out all anxious thought; and the consequences of her vigil were her waking nervous and unrefreshed the next morning.

Lady Leverton, who had not been at the ball the preceding evening, had long finished breakfast when Mary descended; so her coffee was brought to her in the drawing-room, where the Viscountess was already established at her embroidery frame.

Mary was sitting listlessly, stirring little whirlpools in her coffee-cup, and debating how she should disclose to her mother the existence of the serious displeasure which she feared the Earl had conceived, when the Count San Steffano was announced. This was a reprieve; for she did not quite like recounting to Lady Leverton her intemperate attack on the Italian, and its results; feeling that it would grieve her even were she too indulgent to blame. Mary

appeared dejected and thoughtful.
silence quite unusual to him, and one
broken and unmeaning sentences, he s
asked Lady Leverton whether she
Signor Pezzotti meditated, or was ne
rying.

Lady Leverton turned to Mary to
who declared she had heard nothing t
her to form an idea on the subject.

"Was Pezzotti's sister about to be m
asked the Count.

Mary thought not. The Count look

"Why do you ask these questions?
inquired, puzzled in her turn.

The Count hesitated, and then said:

eight o'clock, he hurried to see who might get out of them. From the one, he declared that Lord Brandiston and another gentleman alighted, while from the other came Signor Pezzotti and two young ladies. He had not time to go round into the Church, as he was afraid that my bell would ring in his absence; still, that some marriage was there to be enacted, he had little doubt."

Mary felt herself turn pale, and a shiver rose up to her cheek; but she tried to smile as she said, "What do you fancy, Count? By your grave face, I could almost imagine that you believed Brandiston had played me false, instead of kindly assisting at the wedding of some of these Italian people whom he is so dreadfully fond of cultivating. I have no doubt but that the person whom your servant saw with the Earl, was Maccolini, the great pianiste; he has been exceedingly attentive to Giulia Pezzotti for some time."

The Count professed to think it very likely; though his anxious countenance seemed to betray that it was more from regard to her feelings, that he concealed some foreboding of evil.

Neither Lady Leverton nor the Count, were aware of the state of feud in which Mary and her affianced had been for the last few days; therefore her affected calmness deceived them, supposing that she had grounds for her apparent assurance, that nothing affecting her own interests had occurred; so that, when she suggested that by sending a note, or by the Count calling directly on the Earl, all the apparent mystery would be solved, they at once coincided in her ideas, and the Count left them for the purpose of at once proceeding to Grosvenor Square.

Lady Leverton continued her embroidery, and Mary busied herself with her canaries and some flowers which stood in the balcony; both seemed afraid to alarm the other by any show

of anxiety or the dread of impending evil, and yet both felt that there was cause for the agitation which oppressed them. However, after the lapse of a quarter of an hour or more, Mary could no longer bear this solitary suffering, or the nervous suspense which was overpowering her; and throwing herself on the ground by her mother, and pressing her face to her knees, she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

She wept long and bitterly. There was a consciousness of having acted unkindly in many instances to Lord Brandiston, that was most disturbing, and she had all the feelings of a child who had behaved very naughtily; but still she said nothing of this to Lady Leverton, who, placing her on a sofa and administering sal volatile, tried to re-assure her, telling her how likely all this might be a mistake of the Count's valet, who could have but an imperfect knowledge of the Pezzottis.

The length of time which had now elapsed,

being more than sufficient for the Count to have been to Brandiston House and back, Lady Leverton urged as rather betokening that nothing extraordinary had taken place; for otherwise he would have hastened to inform them. But she failed in calming Mary for any length of time, whose nerves from her sleepless night were exciteable beyond measure; and when, after the expiration of two hours, the Countess San Steffano was announced, Mary had worked herself up to a state of the most pitiable emotion.

On seeing her thus, and the distressed expression on Lady Leverton's face, the Countess immediately on her entrance exclaimed, with a sorrowful tone:

"What! my poor Mary! You have then heard it all?"

It was an abrupt admission that there was something to hear, though she had been delegated by the Count to break the news with

gentleness to Miss D'Arc. However, this was no longer practicable; and the whole extent of what the Countess knew was soon told.

Count San Steffano, on making enquiries at Lord Brandiston's house, had heard that the Earl's travelling carriage had been ordered to be at Deptford at ten o'clock that morning with four post horses; and that his valet, after packing his Lordship's imperials, had left with it; but that the Earl had left Grosvenor Square early that morning in his plain town chariot. This had not yet returned to the stables; therefore the porter had no means of learning what his Lordship's movements were.

Curiosity prompting, and intimacy permitting, the Count at once proceeded to follow up his enquiries for the Earl at Signor Pezzotti's lodgings in the Haymarket. On mounting to the first floor, which was indicated as being the Italian's apartment, he had encountered on the landing place a nondescript being, half valet,

explain to the Count he stood to l
not as servant, as had been conceiv
from his pocket a written paper, h
to the Count; with a flourish, sayi
would explain to his Excellency a
world, the magnificent affair whic
place that morning; and that he w
on his way to the office of the 'M
to order its insertion. It was t
entrusted to him by his most belov

The Count read, in better E
he had given the Pezzottis credit fo
ing announcement:

"This morning, at St. Geor
was married the Earl of Brandiston

Pezzotti. The happy pair after the ceremony set out for Germany; the noble Earl being under an engagement with the King of Bavaria to bring out his splendid Oratorio of *Orfeo nel' Inferno*, at Munich, assisted by the unsurpassed talents of Signor Matteo Pezzotti, the brother of the lovely bride, and late tenor at the King's Theatre."

There was something very like an *affiche* in this; but it was evidently all true: and the Count had nothing to do but to return to Hanover Square, and disclose to his wife the extraordinary and unprincipled manner with which, under the influence of these intriguing Milanese, Lord Brandiston had acted towards poor Mary D'Arc.

The Countess was thunder-struck, and deeply grieved at the intelligence; for though, in her mania for match-making, this affair had been commenced without much consideration, it had become the first object of her heart; and,

indeed, among the worldly, trifling, people with whom she lived, she had gained an *éclat* from it, and the introduction of the beautiful Countess *in futuro*, which had made the past season one of unusual interest to her "used up" mind. She also felt deeply for poor Mary. She knew not exactly to what extent her feelings of tenderness might be implicated; but she was perfectly cognizant of the gratification and intense interest, with which she anticipated the splendour her marriage promised to secure to her. Now all this fabric of happiness was crushed. A known *intriguante*, of whose residence in London she was even ignorant—for from a feeling of shyness at the degree of intimacy she had formed with her, Mary had never mentioned the name of Anna Pezzotti to the Countess—by some mysterious power had carried into effect a plot, which, though not the first attempted against the hearts and liberties of rich young Englishmen, infinitely exceeded

every thing in the magnitude of its conception. Had the Countess known but one half of the facilities, which Mary's own indiscretion had lent to the contriver of the deep-laid scheme, her astonishment would have been considerably lessened; as it was, her regret was only to be exceeded by her wonderment.

Mary's deep emotion, as the Countess with rapid utterance, made known all the particulars which the Count had gathered, was only what might have been expected; but she did her best to console her, mixing up bitter invective against the Earl and the wily Italians, with words of solace and sympathy. However, nothing was so effectual in calming the paroxysm of grief which shook the poor *délaissée*, as the troubled countenance of the Viscountess, who, regarding little the brilliant marriage so unexpectedly broken off, felt only a mother's grief at seeing the distress of her darling child. There was, however, but a temporary lull, and fresh thoughts

and we give without a question our c
tion to the tokens. But there are a g
other emotions of the female heart sh
by sobs and tears. Some of these
rife in the bosom of Mary; and
Countess and trembling mother de
proof of the excess of her affection
Earl, each fresh burst of weeping, a
arose from causes of which they wer
ignorance.

It was, indeed, with a world of loa
indignation that Mary looked back o
had passed. She shrunk under the bit
fication which it is to the young hea
cover, that the flattery and caresses. w

but to betray: and that, instead of simply patronizing the Italian girl, as she had fancied she was doing, she in reality had been the passive instrument in her hands for the furtherance of her deep designs. How sickening, too, was the remembrance of each act of her own folly, as by turns they rose in her mind. First, her incautiousness in being led, by a few *naïve* and satirical remarks on the Earl's monomania, herself to pass sarcastic comments on it. Then, her utter want of prudence, in professing to one almost a stranger, her complete want of sympathy in the tastes of the man, whose addresses she had accepted. And again, the gross folly of having been lured by the most subtle, and at the same time most deferential questioning, into the confession of her intentions to oppose them. She recollected, too, her praises of Anna Pezzotti to the Earl; her assertions as to her superiority to the profession to which her brother destined her; and, above all, she reflected,

her part in the performances of th
evening's concert, while volunteerin
her place with a modesty and self-fo
which enhanced the obligation.

As such multiplied proofs of her
plicity occurred to the miserable M
floods of tears gushed from her eyes
shame and anger, caused by the idea of
ment the brother and sister must h
from each fresh token of her folly,
vent in sobs almost amounting to gro

It is the woman's privilege thus
vexations; and perhaps the rage wh
itself in weeping is the least deadly
ladylike. Be that as it may, towards th
Mary had cried herself into

julep was administered, and the young lady put to bed; and here in a few minutes she fell into one of those sweet slumbers which so frequently overtake, even those most perturbed of earth's inhabitants—naughty children and hysterical young ladies.

Lady Leverton left her daughter's room with grateful feelings of comfort; and a bulletin was despatched to the kind Countess, describing the happy *finale* to all this long day's trouble.

Mary awoke early, and with renewed perceptions came all the grievances which had so overwhelmed her; but now they took a new form. Pique and anger were exhausted; and disappointed ambition, with the downfall of the most brilliant hopes, now shed as much discomfort, as mortification and rancour had the day before.

There is a power, peculiar to the human breast, and in this late instance Mary had shared it to the full—it is that which gives to the future a radiance that the present never owns.

It is a power planted there, no doubt, for th best and holiest purposes; but, like all oth possessions, is occasionally misapplied. Th poet who has sung—

"Man never is—but always to be blest."

was true in his assertion; and our every da observation may show, that the happiness the present hour rarely suffices. The wi among us benefit by this knowledge, and car their hopes far, far beyond the paltry horizon human vision or experience. The worldly al let their present be absorbed—annihilated, l the care of an onward view; but how contract both in aim and object is their look-out; n thing, in fact, but that, which in possessio fills the bosoms of most among them wi satiety and *ennui*. They know all this, a still they strive—still anticipate. "The thi that hath been, is that which shall be, and th which is done, is that which shall be done."

And men, alas! will still pass contentedly through days of toil, and nights of restless care, for uncertain fame, and unsatisfying, perishable treasure. And women? oh, how much worse! Women suffer the bright merry moments of irresponsible girlhood to be filled with plans—with vague, dreamy hopes for future distinction; and, provided the cravings of their puerile ambition are promised fruition, rush with indifference from the softly-gliding days spent in the happy shelter of parental affection, to a state, of which the duties—the requirements are all as yet unknown to them; duties which love alone can lighten—requirements which the heart's best affections can alone enable them to fulfil.

And it was this unknown shore, with all its hidden rocks, its insidious currents—but whose bright headlands, decked with the illusory tints lent by distance, that had so captivated the fancy of Mary; and she wept with bitterness at this recent shipwreck of her hopes; failing to

erect into one of feeling and affection,
a crowd of minor troubles, no less
though of inferior dignity. Among t
paraphernalia already in forward p
there was a portion of it, which, in s
best endeavours, would press on her
with the pertinacity of a hideous nigh
few days previous to this catastrophe
arrived from Paris six dozen of camb
handkerchiefs, sumptuously embroid
the name "Mary," surmounted by a
coronet in the corner. Just seventy-
tions of most tragical mockery.
what would the world say? How
meet her friends? Was there disg

Wrapping her dressing-gown around her, she unclosed her window, and looked out on the bright morning which had dawned on the gay city. There was a gladness in the young day, which seemed to mock her miserable sensations. Even the black, lugubrious statue of Pitt, which always seemed to mourn for him it memorialized, now appeared to glow beneath the golden sunlight, as she looked towards the square. A movement in the street, some few doors distance, attracted her attention. A hearse advanced; here then, at least, was something analagous to her feelings.

Alas! no. Though it was decidedly a funeral, the removal of the corpse into the country, which had, doubtless, necessitated the early hour, seemed to have caused the postponement of the usual signs of mourning. The kindred were probably already assembled in the neighbourhood of the final resting-place; for there was not even visible the conventional

Six men, hanging their ha
hat-bands on the iron railing
into the house. In a few r
turned bearing the coffin. Th
all looked hilarious, and expre
of enjoyment as the fresh
played over their uncovered he
was shoved quickly and witho
the hearse; which seemed i
more than a vast cupboard, de
sundry black bags, which wer
irreverently; and doubtless hel
to be donned when the caval
proach its destination. A priv
drew up. The coachman was

a vivacity not at all consonant with the occasion. He then lightly jumped on his box, smiled, and nodded to two housemaids, as he drove off; who with bright, rosy faces, now stood at the door to witness his departure, and return smiles and nods to the smart black men, who had now completed all their duties.

There was an air of revelry in all this, most repulsive to Mary's feelings; though she had observed it all with a morbid sort of curiosity. She was turning from the window as the hearse drove off, when she perceived three men on the opposite side of the street; whose mournful and pallid countenances, not even the heavenly radiance of the early day, which cast their lengthened shadows behind them, could gladden. They were evidently three musicians returning from a ball. Two carried fiddle-cases, and wore moustachios. The other, doubtless the pianiste, could scarcely carry himself; and seemed half asleep, with weak knees,

begone faces. Oh! how differ undertakers was all this!

"Horrid, horrid world!" M as she closed her window; "D occasion of gaiety, while am mitted to be a cause of suffering life!" and Mary almost wished again reclined her head upon as vulgar people die, but a juvenile notions of decadence; wafted away on a lilac cloud, blue, to a paradise full of myrt lamps. But she did not die sleep, and had visions of fiddler dreaming that the black bags stuffed so immovably into th

the same metemsychosis, proved to be Lord Brandiston, who persecuted more than usual on the subject of his Oratorio. Strange to say, that, at her next waking, which was not until ten o'clock that morning, there was a lightness at her heart almost approaching the matutinal sprightliness of the undertakers.

Oh, the slippery mind of youth! Sorrow, joy, resolves, obligations, recollections—all, all pass off, like the cars of the *montagnes russes*, but to make room for fresh joys — fresh sorrows.

By the evening of the second day, Mary D'Arc looked with a sensation of relief at the cessation of her engagement with the Earl. It would be tiresome to go through the chain of reflections—the philosophical reasoning which led to the conclusion, that she had had an escape, and that doubtless the world—that is her world—would be on her side. In a week, she could jest with the Countess on the

subject of the pocket-handkerchiefs so prematurely promoted to the peerage; and plan with her the best way of disposing of them. A letter from Lord Brandiston had also much softened the feelings of indignation which had been excited against him.

This letter ought to have been delivered immediately after the ceremony; but, the coachman to whom it had been confided having got intoxicated with the confidant of the Signor Matteo, it had been forgotten until the following morning. In it, the Earl spoke with much feeling on the evident dissonance of tastes and opinions of himself and Miss D'Arc —a dissonance which each passing day seemed to confirm. He spoke also of the apparent absence of affection, which had led her to prefer the amusements and attentions of the crowd to the society of himself. He dwelt on the difficult position in which he had felt himself placed, when he found that the remonstrances

which he had hazarded were unavailing. To break off their engagement suddenly, and without apparent cause, might have done her disservice and injustice, in the eyes of the world, and thus have been a means of his returning injury for the kind treatment and gratifying confidence which he had ever received from the Viscountess. He had preferred rather to appear to the eyes of the world as an offender; being assured, that the whole of the affair of the broken engagement, and even his union with one who might be conceived unsuited to him, would pass away from peoples' minds like any other nine days' wonder, leaving Miss D'Arc respected and admired, as she ever must be; and himself the happy husband of one, whose excellence and attractions every minute brought more vividly to his knowledge.

This was all very well, and Mary felt that it was so; and though not actually acknowledging with how much justice the Earl had complained,

fulness is accounted one.
unfrequently appears that mist
fertile in fostering egotism; an
taking all the indulgence and sa
as calmly as though they were
right. It was with some such f
D'Arc heard the Countess San
that herself and her mother sl
them on a lengthened tour the
ing on the Continent. She tho
kindness which the San Steffa
wishing it, and her own delight
and, wrapt in the importance
ruffled feelings, she forgot to ask
such a plan would be agreea
countess. As it happened it

Countess-bride had considerably anticipated the next half-year's income; and an entire break up of her establishment, she was assured by the prudent Mr. Joblyn, was the only measure that could restore the symmetry of her banker's book. He also ventured to point out the unreasonableness of exceeding an income, which was adequate for all moderate enjoyment; urging greater circumspection for the future.

Lady Leverton promised everything, with the firm intention of acting up to her word; but she told Mary nothing of this, neither mentioning the low state of her finance, nor the necessity of future economy. She thought this might make the lost coronet more seriously regretted; and with unfailing indulgence she wished to spare her every cause for anxiety.

CHAPTER X.

" Joyful—for all things minister'd deligl
The lake and land, the mountains a
The Alps their snowy summits rear'd i
Tempering with gelid breath the su

THE setting out on travels, wl
days of youth, all is prospect an
decidedly the best part; still, h
whole of this Swiss and Italian
finitely agreeable, with nothing in

each successive pleasure had not the drawback of the consideration, how it was to be described; a thought which has spoilt many a morning spent at the Vatican, and troubled that calm which a Venetian gondola is supposed to yield.

As no notes had been kept, Mary's continental retrospect offered merely a visionary whole, in which no incident or salient feature occurred to mark the current of eighteen swiftly passing months; the first three of which had been spent in a pretty villa on Lake Leman. Her recollections of this period were mixed up with chamois leather shoes and goat cream cheeses, and the ineffaceable impression left by the lovely lake; a spot which Lamartine paints so faithfully, when poetically adjuring it to retain the remembrance of his love:

"O Lac! rochers muets! grottes! forêt obscure!
Vous que le temps épargne ou qu'il peut rajeunir,
Gardez de cette nuit, gardez belle nature,
Au moins le souvenir!

" Qu'il soit dans le zéphir qui frémi
Dans les bruits de tes bords, par t
Dans l'astre au front d'argent qui
De ces molles clai

" Que le vent qui gémit, le roseau q
Que les parfums légers de ton air
Que tout ce qu'on entend, l'on voi
Tout dise, ils ont

Mary had felt, without love,
siasm to augment its effect, a
of this beautiful region, where
smiling waters own a charm fo
every nation; and where every
and system may meet to enjo
sweet neutral ground of nature

Swiss tour: and, with the exception of occasional balls and dinners, and a fall from an insurrectionary mule at the Baths of Lucca, on reverting to them, Mary could recall nothing but everlasting exits and entrances into churches and picture galleries; which had interested her too little for her to observe much variety in the treasures they contained. Indeed, what gallery ever failed in the nude male figure, with the arrows added to make it a St. Sebastian? Or the Hebrew Fishermen clad by anticipation in apostolical garments? Or the female head, which too mundane for a Madonna, figures in the catalogue as a Magdalen? Or, above all, those attempts at a delineation, which should never have been dared by the faithful or profane.

Oh! what a libel is it on the worshippers of the One Uncreated, who yet bore the form of the creature, to hear the jargon of art bandied to and fro, in discussions,—on what, if excellent,

canvas, so made a party in profanity

A Parisian *élégant* would tear in
done lithograph of his favourite
yet what vilely speculative daubs wi
Catholic" tolerate of Him, whom
worship has subjected to the s
imagery, with which the Assyrian, t
the Indian of the distant seas has
notions of a God.

Madame de Stael has called
"*la culte de douleur.*" It is an e
throws as it were a sanctity over it,
haps it were indecorous to parod
looking at one branch of this wors
forbear from designating it as *u*
tableau

and truest host of worshippers. One whose opinion has weight, in speaking of the paintings and sculptures in the Italian churches, remarks that they "please and dazzle the senses, but they neither raise the affections, nor assist that true devotion which steals over the heart, when the humble Christian repeats in the spirit of the prayer the endearing words, 'Our Father.' The human being is composed of body, soul, and spirit. If I may interpret with the best philosophers, the soul to denote that part of man which is delighted with the intellectual, as contra-distinguished from the spiritual, I would say that the pictures and other works of art please the senses, but do not touch the heart. They make the mind sentimental, not devotional. They soften the intellect, but do not pacify the conscience. They refine the taste, but do not lessen sin. They excite admiration, but they do not increase holiness. They fetter most the immortal spirit to the earth, at the

of the Second Commandment ex
Church of Christ; and that it is
and unwise to endeavour to assist t
religionist in his aspirations towar
the picture, the statue, and the cr
gion is the flight of the invisible
to the invisible spirit of God; but s
painting are splendid hindrances a
impediments to its flight."*

England now shows a taste for
representation—the graven image ir
Has the Church, in consequence,
peace or purity? Ah! we must n
questions here. Mary D'Arc neve
interrogations; and it is of her t
doings that we would alone treat.

Mary had no taste for painting, and entered but little into the subject. Her Parisian masters had frightened all liking of the art out of her, by exacting excellence from a beginner; and if now she lingered in a gallery or returned to some lone chapel for further inspection, it was rather to catch again and again the calm, yet loving glance of a St. Jerome, to smile on some smiling cherub, or to study the *coiffure* of a Madonna, than to ecstasize over the regular and admitted master-piece of the chapel or gallery then under review, with all the technicallity of *belli arti* gossip.

The party had returned to England, all with knowledge and experience improved on some few points. The Countess, in the person of her father-in-law, had learnt that a Sicilian Prince is something less in consequence than a rich Yorkshire Squire. Lady Leverton had learnt, that, though her late husband had decided, from the circumstance of her birth, she was obviously

rerent halting places, the gaily-
serving for the time-being as a plac
and the exposition of beautiful toile
found a well-spring of happiness in
and incense-teeming chapel. Ma
ments by travel were somewhat
nature. She learnt—that is the
structed her in the fact—that there
better set of men to be met with i
are usually encountered in Brighton
and that young, or rather single
decidedly at a discount in Italian so
Mary had made three conquests
sojourn in the Papal States. Not
eligible, as the Countess expressed,
into consideration; but still of

for vanity, and usually betray them in that soft hour for "stand at ease" before the gentlemen leave the dining-room. Some vest it in precocious children, some in picotees. Some find glory in their lady's maid's exactions, and the magnitude of their shoemaker's bills. The Countess for the moment placed her boast on Mary D'Arc's popularity. The knowledge of this acted powerfully on a disposition already too prone to estimate at a false rate the attentions of the crowd; and Mary acquired the habit of making a systematic and continual outlay for conquest.

Though Lady Leverton was silent on the subject, she did not lightly estimate the felicitous impression it had yielded her, to find herself, though heretofore alone in her religion, one in a congregation of believers and with a multitude bending beneath the blessing of a Pope.

Mr. D'Arc, on the birth of their daughter, had exacted from his wife a solemn promise that

ably enhanced, he considered, by h
lined with purple cloth, and his
doled out to him from a red vel
powdered footman. The circumsta
Leverton praying to a crucifix, at on
her a Papist; and though he had
a clear idea of what that epithet co
he knew it was of a depreciatory na
electioneering meetings, he had form
where one of the candidates had be
of a tendency to Romanism, had t
mind into a deep, though vague horr
Guy Fauxes, graven images, Smithfi
crafty Jesuits had formed some of th
features of the abuse hurled at the

grounds. But D'Arc had accepted as fact, all the refractions from truth permitted at a contested election; and, when at the evening ball he saw the daughters remaining without partners, he referred their desertion to the hated faith; unconscious that they were guilty of a much deeper crime in the eyes of the fine gentlemen there present—that of wearing black satin shoes and pink silk stockings!

That a child of his should embrace such unpopular tenets, was a contingency the popularity-hunting Mr. D'Arc could not for a moment hazard. The promise of non-interference with her religion was earnestly and hastily demanded from the mother. It was obediently and tranquilly given; it had been strictly and faithfully kept. Unversed in controversy—unschooled in the lore by which councils, confession, and catechisms pronounced on the exact words and doings that were to ensure a direct entrance into Paradise—the simple, but



fact fulfilled the conditions annexed reception. She could not understanc ference between the Protestant and Church. · Both seemed to her parall leading to the same end. The circum this end not being always reached who traversed them, she attributed to t procedure of the pilgrim, rather tha way he had to tread. This belief tranquil as to her daughter's creed. seen the little thing repeat its praye nurse's knee; she had seen the youn bend in a devotional attitude in l Protestant church; heard her repeat

Living herself wholly and constantly in the realized presence of an Almighty, brought still nearer by rites and ordinances, it never occurred to Lady Leverton that all this could be entered into with thoughts, even then engaged in the veriest tinsel and evil-disposing gew-gaws of the world. But so were her daughter's—so were half the fair young thing's mind occupied, even while adorning the crimson-decked galleries of the churches they had sought.

At this day things are improving; but at the period of which we write, those frequenting fashionable chapels, ran small risk of being awakened to aught unpleasantly startling. Pastors were then found, too well-bred to preach on errors which might give an air of personality to their words. They rather preferred to fulminate against those sins which they were sensible their congregations "had no mind to."

Until her visit to Rome, Lady Leverton, giving to every one of the Reformed Church

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tranquil as to her daughter's cr
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Protestant church; heard her
hymning of the minstrel-king,
to which her own lips gave

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THE

PERILS OF FASHION.

"Il aimait à conter ce qu'il avait vu; et très souvent son imagination lui offrait, plus que sa mémoire ne lui fournissait."—MÉMOIRES DU CARDINAL DE RETZ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
COLBURN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1852.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Po



PERILS OF FASHION.

CHAPTER I.

"Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends;
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike;
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide."

POPE.

MARY D'ARC had always found Brighton charming from the first moment that its fresh, exciting breeze, its bright, sparkling sea, and

there, no particular realization o
occurred to her, there was a glad i
pleasure which extended to her an
the days still to be spent there.
exceeded even the promise; and th
ment of the season, with its gay
every form and denomination, g
same idea of inexhaustible treasure
that a child feels on first entering a
the grandmamma's sovereign clench
hot hand.

The partially dormant tenden
nature—tendencies which turned
harvesting of suffrage of every d
seemed now awakened to fresh
energy; and she experienced tha

may consist—wheat, gold, fossilized fish-bones, dried flowers, or fiddles—all alike are precious to those who amass them. Praise and conquest were Mary's hoarding; and they came to her bidding. But there was no limit to her desires on this point. The passion for admiration, to which all her success and popularity in London had so largely administered, seemed mixed up in her very being; and, though betraying itself in no unamiable or unseemly form, constituted very nearly the aim and end of her existence.

It met with no reverse. She was like a bright and beautiful butterfly, glancing amidst flowers as bright and beautiful as itself; with this difference, that we never hear of the pleasure it is for the gorgeous damask rose to find the insect's fragile form reposing for a sunny instant on its bosom, or its pique at seeing the next instant a scrubby pink equally favoured. But ask those splendid cavaliers, what it was to hold Mary D'Arc's pliant waist in the waltz, to feel her delicate fingers resting

restrained them from [illegible]
to the succeeding partner, whc
from their hands. Mary knew a
liked it. She liked to put men
and she liked to put them in agai
of the variations to the rapid a
rondeau, to the tune of which h
on.

Females came equally within t
enchantments. Many a grim
with good-humour at her merry
almost imperious demand for th
the young loved her without app
while gaining lessons in attracti
look, every gesture, in short, fr
of her perfections: not omittin

If there are any men silly enough to waste their minutes over these pages, how scornfully and sceptically will they smile at the assertion, that all this laying out for admiration, this intense coquetry, this thirst and eagerness for conquest was transacted without one feeling, one thought, which, as far as purity is concerned, they would shut from the bosom of a young sister, a daughter springing into womanhood, or a promised bride. Men may see—they do see—the flashing eye, the burning cheek, the beating bosom; they hear the ringing laugh, the saucy reply, the kind word, the mock scolding, and all the pretty mimicry of love or anger, and they believe sentiment or passion is there. They are wrong. There is nothing but the cheating semblance, which fashion and custom —both deeply to be deprecated—have licensed and tolerated. All that has been specified may take place, and the heart be still as cold and pure as "the icicle which hangs on Dian's temple."

evil, because the [illegible]
countenanced, where the reality
demned. But still the assertion
that often while love and the d
may disturb the bosom of the mo
demurest, the stillest, lone girl
solitarily among the meadows or
father's home, a Thais of society
the way to fire more than "anot
still have ice at her heart. A qu
stance possibly; partaking more
of a Badminton mixture, than
Norway; still there are gelid pa

Why, then, we may well ask,
in a pursuit which admits of
disadvantageous to their charact

in the trail of a fox—spread a huge mainsail to win a challenge cup—hurl a cricket-ball like a thunderbolt—adroitly pass the guarded foil to the bosom of an antagonist, and a thousand such *tours de force;* and is all this done coldly—inanimately? Surely not. The cheeks flush, the eye gleams, the heart throbs, the lip trembles. And yet, do we argue that aught of passion is there? We know that it is merely the excitement of exercised power and conquered difficulty. And ninety-nine women out of a hundred—English women, that is to say—seek and secure lovers with as little expenditure of sentiment or feeling.

The old song says: "The conquest I prize, though the slave I disdain." This a little elucidates the spirit in which things are done, and the value a coquette places on her lovers; about tantamount to that, which a fisher puts on the small fry he inadvertently catches, and which lie jumping, disregarded on the bank, while he is in search of better sport.

that party ...

undermining of principle, no def
for that state of society which pe
courages it. What can be said o
contrast which half our English g
that of being dragged from the
tranquil atmosphere of their scho
launched at once into a career,
and mothers applaud every appr
and popularity, with the same vel
Roman populace do the startled a
steeds on the Corso.

This cannot be defended; neit
things, while the present state
dures, be suggested. The syst
its core; and it were almost

should be passed: that is, where an early marriage has not given its interests and occupations. Are they to be coquettes, Bluestockings, Sisters of Mercy, artists, musicians, needlewomen, or cooks? All are objectionable, as far as wifehood is concerned: though a little borrowed from each character would not be a bad foundation. But then they are so incompatible—at least, so the world is pleased to consider them—and, therefore, for want of a better, the old system prevails; and women are educated solely with reference to the ten years, which is about the average of their spinsterhood, after emerging into "public life."

Trained for attraction and display, they perform well the task which has been assigned them. The scene changes. They are wives. The *rôle* has not been studied; and into what a labyrinth of woe and worry, disappointment and disability, *ennui* and amazement—the real "amazement" of the marriage service—does their new life lead! Men cannot teach; they

road cannot be mended. Ther
amiable girls who can never be a
position; there are some who gai
savoir faire in a long maidenh
majority, it must be confessed, r
of wedlock.

To make women helps, meet f
tion of man it is likely they may
thought of. The thing is impos
never be otherwise, while girl
parents, choose their husbands, a
who has seen a large family of dau
and left, as their fancies led ther
reference to their own capabiliti
into which their heedless steps l

might be given regarding the preparation for matrimony, as it is very possible that the girl trained for an exemplary wife, may never become one. This question then presents itself;—is the woman, educated for the duties, responsibilities, and adornment of wedded life, likely to be a less agreeable member of society, or to partake less of the happiness of life, than one brought up merely for the attractions expected in spinsterhood, and with the absence of decision of character and common sense, which habit accustoms one to look for in girls? The answer is at once suggested. No. The whole matter then resolves itself into this small compass; that a girl educated for the accomplished and useful wife, by that means is fitted to take a better station in society as a woman; and that without reference to marriage. However, before the question can be carried, there must be a little inquiry into the statutes of the "smart-going bachelors."

So we will end a digression, which has been

her dear, lively *laisser aller* Brig
hearing aught that a maiden mi
without feeling aught, thinking
speaking, knowing aught that a g
tain position in society"—by v
tualism is meant the best—mi
feel, think or speak.

A girl, with correct feelings an
among all the snares which a life
is supposed to present, like the
among heated plough-shares, an
the test. One cause for the imm
the description of men met with i
lemonade society of London,
Paris; specimens of "carpet kn

Besides this, however much the young of both sexes are mingled together, they rarely meet without a witness. The *tête-à-tête*, over which a score of hungry dowagers preside, with prying ears and searching glances, is never a dangerous one; and girls dance through successive seasons without further avowals of love, than that of being constantly the sought and chosen partner.

Lady Leverton saw this, and regretted that it was so. She felt the unprotected and unendowered position in which her death would leave Mary, and became as anxious on the subject of her marriage, as the keenest among matchmaking mothers could have been. But the end of another winter came; and, though no party was considered complete ungraced by Mary's presence, though she never for a minute found herself unsought, uncourted, in the gay assemblies in which she shone, no declared lover, that is, no marrying, settlement-making lover was among the throng of her admirers.

out perplexities, by the arriv
friend and counseller, Mr. Jo
to tell, and make her look a
in her drafts at Christmas, sh
the March revenue. There
the fact; and a strict economy
not only to keep the next six
into the quarter's sum total, b
dry little debts, contracted almo

This lifting up of the financ
aside the idea of a spring in L
saw all the gay *corps de ba*
the capital, leaving her the onl
set, to move amongst the w
the sake of cheap lodgings, un

Mary resigned herself to this Andaman of fashion, with the good temper which shone in everything she did; but she still felt the deprivation, and like an unstrung chord vibrated to no sound of gladness. So much for the wisdom which suffers that style of life to be led, that the cessation of excitement merely becomes one of the evils of existence. And yet who can say that half their acquaintance are not pursuing the very same course, and reaping the very same results?

Mary tried to find the leisure, which all this quiet gave her, agreeable. She commenced the study of Spanish. She renewed her musical exercises which had fallen much into desuetude, since Pezzotti had poisoned the fount of harmony, by placing the bitterness of difficulty in everything she attempted; and which, in the new light his sister's marriage had thrown upon his conduct, had evidently been done with a sinister purpose. She also tried to think that early hours and a tranquil life were good for

the absence of all her customary
its stronghold; the Spanish g
and the South Downs provin
unprofitable.

Having declined all invitati
sional evening or dinner part
time to time came out like t
of an all but extinguished fire
and Mary found it a great task
a party at the theatre; but,
the filling the house was for
charity, they had not felt at
themselves.

During the second act of th
which had ever been spouted

She had been pre-admonished not to give them her attention by those of the regiment they had succeeded, who had duly impressed upon her mind that this was by no means a "crack regiment;" that the officers were a "slow set," and "muffs;" and that at Cahir, last winter, Lady G—— had not found one decent soul among them, that she might ask to dinner.

Rather in listlessness, than in observance, Mary's eyes passed over the box, where an ostentatious rattling of swords and sabretaches seemed to proclaim, "Look at us, we are the military;" when her attention was arrested by the sight of the most perfect head and face she had ever beheld. French romances have a stereotyped description of handsome men, "*la tête d'un Antinoüs sur le corps d'un Apollon;*" but nothing in the whole Heathen mythology could compare with the faultless beauty of the mortal before her. The fair open forehead, the noble aquiline of the nose, the firm but gracefully set lips, the trim moustache, the close

occasionally cross one's path, understand the pun of St. *Angli, sed Angeli.*"

Mary had perceived all this glances; but afterwards, fin object of the intense gaze of t ture, she had, with commen withdrawn her eyes.

During the slight dislodgen place in the interval between afterpiece, this marvel of natu entered their box with the g party they had been requested now presented him to his w Leverton and Mary, as Ca

herself, that her eyes constantly reverted to him, while his own gaze seemed rivetted on herself.

Perhaps no woman was ever more the object of unremitting attentions, than henceforth was Mary, under the constant "look out" of Adrian Henniker. Before the morning's walk his charger was everlastingly caracolling beneath her balcony; and, to whatever quarter her footsteps were directed, there sprang up, like a fairy phantom, this "*gentil hussard.*"

A profound and deferential bow was all the advantage he had as yet presumed to take of the introduction at the theatre; but, even in that, there was a meaning, a force, which, in spite of herself, drew a crimson flush to her cheeks. At each of these oft-repeated meetings his eyes met hers with an expression of devotion and tenderness that seemed to call for the kind smile, which she felt but too well disposed to return to his graceful obeisance; and she learnt to feel an interest and pleasure in these passing greetings.

A "Hospital Ball" was anno
ambiguous title, an assemb
benefit of the funds of that
technically called. It promis
fashionably attended, and Ma
that this Ramazan in her
at an end.

It cannot be denied that th
Henniker mixed a little with
which Mary entered the ball-
and there was a degree of pl
pectation, that he would see
acquaintance which as yet h
farther than the outer courts o
However, she was scarcely pr

every look and gesture seemed dictated by the profoundest feelings of admiration. He spoke but little; and as if made taciturn by the intensest emotions, he seemed rather to court silence, than discourse on the usual indifferent topics which are discussed in the duration of a quadrille. He danced with no one else; and, though anything but intrusive, by some power, lent him by the passion to which he appeared to yield himself as to an irresistible force, he was almost at her side the whole evening.

Still, he in no way infringed the laws of good breeding; and, while Mary felt that his every look and thought were for herself, there was a delicacy and tact in all he did, by no means likely to compromise her, or indeed interfere with her dancing or attention to others. In short, his haunting of her seemed more the hovering near of some phantom, than the importunities of an enamoured man.

The absoluteness of this ethereal worship told; and Mary, as she sat in deep abstraction,

Lady Leverton had also
She too had arrived at the
and the next morning at br
inquired of her daughter,
Captain Henniker. It was soc
the eldest son of Sir Richard F
Park or Hall in the northern
Thus much was satisfactory: f
had some recollection of havin
hermit-like Baronet of that
D'Arc had once encountered
meeting.

Mary guessed why these qu
asked, but made no commen
about a fortnight from that tim

Captain Heniker to herself, had been observed by her mother, and approved.

The ball at Lewes passed off precisely as the Brighton one had done, with exactly the same quiet demonstrations of exceeding and overwhelming love. They were in this instance still more productive of effect; and there was that certain trepidation in Mary's words and manners the next morning at breakfast, which might efficiently indicate to all sharp-sighted papas and mammas, the impression made by the partners of the preceding evening.

This little agitation of spirit was considerably increased during the morning, by the appearance of a letter on a silver waiter, announced as coming from the cavalry barracks. It was a letter looking as official as a notice from the Treasury, with as great a prodigality of red sealing-wax; and, in fact, contained much connected with Mary's future destiny.

It was a brief, unaffected, but feeling exposition of Captain Henniker's sentiments for

inform him, without telling M
devoted attachment which ha
he feared prematurely, to asp
For the purpose of hearing
fate, he trusted that Lady Lev
him an interview that aftern
she would pardon his imp
sideration of the fearful anx
perience, until Miss D'Arc's
be made known to him.

As Mary had taken the l
this epistle over her mother'
was no further communicatic
to learn from her the an
turned.

and reperusing some of its paragraphs, said, with pleasure in her every accent:

"This *is* love—this is real and true love. Just think, I have known Captain Henniker four months, and scarcely a day has passed that he has not shown some mark of devotion. Oh! he must be amiable, mamma, he is so handsome. How the Countess will admire him! I am sure I must love him—I really am sure that I do love him."

The logic of these words was not quite unexceptionable; but the mother's heart comprehended it; and at four o'clock she had the pleasure of telling Captain Henniker her daughter accepted his addresses; and the satisfaction of learning from himself that his family were high and honourable, and that his expectations, as eldest son, were good. No other point connected with money matters was referred to.

Mary herself made one of the council before it broke up; and it would be difficult to say



exquisitely beautiful counten
flushed with emotion and joy
he would prove a kind and i
and that, in fact, he was
likely to ensure the future
child.

The *séance* broke up wit
that Captain Henniker sh
to his father, whose consent
of obtaining. And so it
from the old Baronet to La
and gentlemanly, expressed
at the prospect of the uni
her daughter.

The letter touched sli

But, he added, that if she would instruct her man of business to communicate with him, and make known the fortune which Miss D'Arc might possess, he should, doubtless, satisfy him as to the expectations and property that his son would ultimately possess.

Mr. Joblyn's assistance was forthwith convened in the matter; and he came from London to aid by his advice and professional opinion. He at first strongly contested the wish of the Viscountess to make over to her daughter half of her life interest in the Leverton dowry. Not only on account of the reduction which it would make in her own income, but because, being dependant on her life, it might cease at a moment when they could the least suffer such a diminution of their means.

All these musty and lawyer-like objections, however, were vehemently opposed by both ladies. But a few minutes in the company of the handsome and ardent Henniker, did more

instructed him.

CHAPTER II.

"'Tis not the lover that is lost,
The love for which we grieve;
But for the peace which they have cost,
The mem'ry which they leave."

LANDON.

DURING the period of this correspondence between Mr. Joblyn and Sir Richard Henniker, his son passed the whole of his mornings at the house of the Viscountess. At her request one or two invitations to evening parties had been declined, as she thought all the preliminaries of the marriage should be settled before

force of the objections offered
countess, and would have acced
her wish that they should not ap
in public, until Mr. Joblyn might
Sir Richard's answer to his le
splendid ball, given by the officers
regiment, and of which the invitat
long issued, seemed to demand a
its favour. Lady Leverton y
daughter's wishes, more from a
pleasure, than from conviction
of her argument, that giving up
sequence of a matrimonial engage
that they were only attended
purpose; and the two affianced

to beauty of form and feature think the graces of *tournure* essential, a lovely woman arrayed in all the prettiness of ball-room costume, is an object of critical interest. To the most fastidious of such connoisseurs, the faultless contour of Miss D'Arc must have given satisfaction, as she entered the rooms of the Ship Hotel, which had been engaged that night by the gallant Hussars who gave the ball.

There is a mysterious charm in fashion, which sheds over the simplest robes a spell that gold and embroideries or rainbow colours fail to give; thus, particular only in the simplicity of her dress, the unadorned luxuriance of her glossy hair, the freshness—one could almost say,—the cleanliness of her glowing complexion, it spoke so of pure fountains and sweet wash-balls. Mary stood up in the first quadrille, the admired of the whole assembly.

They had come late, and Mary fancied that the love-sick Adrian would be at the door to receive them, particularly as she had not seen

that he was not near; and th
pleasing, that, seeing all eye
towards her as she entered the
rejoiced that the greeting with
not then take place.

In a few minutes, the Lieute
the regiment advanced, and en
for the quadrille, just then for
took his arm, she felt rather
dilatoriness of Henniker, expe
every moment to hear his harm
her elbow. But the dance wa
still he had not made his appe
was an expression on the Colonel
serious and kind, that for a m

it would thus leave her in ignorance, and so incur the charge of want of feeling, by seeking amusement while he was suffering.

Mary rejoined Lady Leverton, and to her could not refrain from expressing some surprise at the absence of Henniker, who, in her turn, surmised that it might be caused by some slight indisposition.

While they were discussing every possible cause, another of the officers came to ask Mary to waltz.

It was the very young Marquis of Bangor. He certainly might have been classed among the dolts of creation; and yet in his extreme silliness and simplicity, he sometimes uttered things so comical, or so cutting, as the chance might be, that there was that sort of excitement in conversing with him, which might be found in playing with a sucking bear. Captain Henniker had often spoken of the Marquis, as having more in him than people gave him credit for; and there was some intimacy be-

held her from immediately ma
was not until a pause in their t
said, as quietly as a vague anx

"Do you know why Capta
here this evening?"

The Marquis looked oddly
ment, and then answered, wi
of words:

"Yes. Don't you?"

"Indeed, I do not," Mary
"so perhaps you will tell me."

"He's bolted," was the br

Mary was sufficiently conv
by which the young men of
their force of eloquence in

"Didn't he tell you?"

"I have been from home all the morning," she said quickly, glad to find some extenuation for the palpable neglect of her feelings.

"Didn't he write?" asked the Marquis.

"No. But doubtless he will," Mary answered.

"I'll bet he does," was the rejoinder.

There was a slight pause. At last, Mary asked, looking much more anxious than she intended, or fancied she did:

"If you know, Lord Bangor, why or where Captain Henniker is gone, will you not tell me?"

"Oh! I know all about it well enough," the Marquis said, with an expression of concern in his vacant, red face, one would not have given it credit for executing; "I know well enough, and so do two or three more of our fellows. By George! I lent him twenty pounds to be off with."

"Why did he want to go?" Mary inquired,



the Marquis answered
haps you had better w
dance."

"I would much rathe
said earnestly, almost exp
thing tragic.

"Well, if you must
Bangor said, with a litt
portance; and about th
people put on, when abou
which does not affect th
but little for. "You r
niker had a letter from h
ing, to tell him that yo
of tin he and all our fell

"Bless you—no," Bangor replied. "The poor fellow is deucedly in Short Street; and has only kept his duns quiet by promising to pay directly he touched your dibs. The beggars wanted to arrest him, when Miss Denmark and the blacking-man's daughter refused him; and they won't stand the third. I told him to make himself scarce, until old Sir Dick could compound with his duns. It'll be a deuced sell for Buckmaster, who has got a chalk against him as long as my arm."

"Come, Lord Bangor, we shall lose our valse, if you gossip so exceedingly," Mary said quietly, as she placed her hand on his shoulder, and whirled off with him, to one of the most rapid of Strauss's movements. There was a little dryness in her mouth and throat, with a sense of constriction in the bosom of her dress; but she continued dancing with a power over herself, she could scarce account for;—Lord Bangor called it "pluck."

Though sedulously avoiding every approach



was a lightness in Mary'
tiness in the slightly compr
head, perfectly incompatible
of grief—and so far re-as
was a quickness in her mann
a forced laugh, which spol
perceptions of some jar.
seemed determined not to d
the carriage, on their way
merrily respecting the ball
their house, kissed her mo
landing place, without ent
room, and followed her m
room.

Even there the decepti

But what a sea of angry and offended feeling was raging beneath the smooth surface, which habit and a vigorous effort at self-possession had contributed to maintain. And yet the unveiled truth had not been an instant from her thoughts, that she had been the intended victim of a fortune-hunter, whose pretended love had been a cold-hearted cheat, and whose sudden desertion was an outrage as open as it was monstrous. The *empressement* with which the Colonel of the regiment had received her, and the attentions of the other officers, she could now perceive were as repudiations of being accessory to the degrading wrong she had received; but she felt they were tacit betrayals of their knowledge of what had passed, even had not the slang of the Marquis of Bangor instructed her in the galling truth, that the insult she had received was known to them.

Her maid left the room. But still her calmness was maintained; and although the impulse was at once to seek her mother, and make her



was wounded — a fac
deavoured to hide fr
degradation.

She turned to her
kneeling there, and wh
superstitious observanc
rendered a habit. The
is used advisedly. Wc
God," has been so desi
and surely prayers to
and in utter unconsci
meaning of the act,
category.

There is a fearful r
who "say" their pra

was one of these. For the last ten years, the nightly orison which had trickled from her lips, without impeding one thought or remembrance of the gay scene she had just left, was as indirect in its application, with its precise powers as little understood or inquired into, as was the cramp-bone of her old nurse. Still, with all this failure in the reach and aim of her devotions, the very act of kneeling is an obeisance to some superior power; and, with that act, the pride which may inflate the heart at the moment it does that homage, at once suffers diminution. Pride must always be in antagonism with prayer; and for that reason an esteemed aid with "auld Clootie."

Mary's pride fled with the first whispered word of her devotions; and humbled, aggrieved and broken-hearted, a burst of the most passionate sorrow ensued.

She wept long and bitterly. The woman's heart, with all its budding tendernesses and joys, had been, as it were, crushed by the



of his influence with he
prodigal had involved.

Now that the despera
dignity the degradatior
upon her had given wa
and softening effects of
of prayer, Mary's burs
mother. With that l
at once the root an
love, and which, heedle
in every trouble seeks
of meeting, she haster
and lips quivering witl
ment of her mother.

The Viscountess

l letter which ought to have reached her early
the evening, had been given to her on her
urn from the ball. Divested of some con-
tional and commonplace sentiments, which
t but little way in disguising the absolute
t of feeling with which it was written, it
rned her, that, owing to his disappointment
he expected fortune of her daughter, which
Richard had been led to believe was con-
rable, he had commanded him to break
an engagement, which must bring ruin
oth. Nothing but the dread of involving
s D'Arc in the difficulties which beset
, could have induced him to resign an
ction, which it had been his pride to
ve existed; but stern necessity admitted
no other course of action. And then the
eotype ended with expressions of regard
respect, and a final adieu. A postscript
ht have been added that the writer was
ut to try the advantages which a hand-
e person, a good address, and an indefinite

looked to the comfort of h
in such an affair, there
resource and consolation.
daughter, writhing under t
abashed with the apprehe
blame, there was none.

To have seen the gay a
of the preceding day, she
been recognised in the hu
young woman into whicl
transformed her ; at or
gloomily abstracted, pond
had taken place, sickening
of the trust she had so in
treachery so deliberately

the butterfly. At one moment she had spread her painted wings amongst flowers and sunshine, as bright as they, and now, though all wore the same smile, was lying with closed pinions a lifeless and dusky thing.

In the embarrassment and distress of the moment, it was a comfort to write for the advice and sympathy of the Countess San Steffano; and though, in describing the extent of her grievances, Mary found an exciting and bitter interest, still the task was better than the torpor, into which wounded feelings and remediless injury had cast her.

The Countess's answer was all kindness, all indignation. Her advice was to bear a noble and unsmitten front, and to hasten to show the world, that the baseness of an unprincipled fortune-hunter, created too much contempt to admit of sorrow. "Be it known, darling," the letter concluded, "that the Count and myself have the greatest comfort in perceiving by your letter, that, in spite of all your pathos,

diable things as a torn para
rubber ball, a fractured ki
porated glass of Seltzer
accordingly. Give a ball.
out of quarantine; and it
be pronounced 'clean' fro
a love-fit, as the plague. I
your dance by the 30th of
time we shall be at Goo
come to it, and bring th
and some other *preux*."

We will not pause to
or inquire whether it were
woman to show by retir
that her affections were a

as Walter Scott apostrophizes, "one who could win woman's breast and leave her." In the one case, a forsaken woman is simply pitied as a *délaissée*; in the latter, encouraged as a person who having lost the odd trick, commences a fresh game.

Mary's whole soul shrunk from pity under such circumstances: so the ball was given.



CHAPTE

"Thus some retire to nourish
Some seeking happiness not
Some to comply with humc
To social scenes by nature
Some swayed by fashion, so

AGAIN a winter of joy passed swiftly away. E pointed assemblies; an

pretty toys of the Christmas tree on the passing hours.

Never had the Viscountess' visiting list been so large. Perhaps the shade cast by Captain Henniker's conduct, had made her more anxious to wall herself in from the aspersions of strangers, by the increased extent of her acquaintance; and she therefore laid herself out to make new ones.

Brighton, of all other places, is the most genial soil for any fag end of nobility to flourish in. Its inhabitants live too much in a bustle to take pleasure in constituting courts of enquiry, as to who, and what, people are, as country people do. They guess that, among the heaps of sand there accumulating, there may be probably a good deal of gold dust; but, lacking time for the sifting, they take sand and gold dust together. In such a place, therefore, though the purest descent may be boasted under the ambiguous distinction of Mr. or Mrs., the

towards seeking an introducti
she might almost feel it antic
the growth of acquaintance v
encouraged, grew Mary's sph
She was still the beauty of th
was this difference only between
and that of preceding periods.
contented herself with passiv
tentions; she now exerted l
them. She did secure them;
thought that the sum total
vanity was equally gratifying.
so; it owned the difference
between gratuities and wages.

A marriage broken off has

ses, it is the Moscow to her string of contests. All the hard fighting in the world will t retrieve the false step; and abdication is ost frequently forced upon her. But beauties, e Emperors, defer that dullest of all steps, descent from a throne. Well did Mary rd off the moment for such a measure; and ut, too, without aught of unbecoming consion. Much good humour, much vivacity manner, much power in drawing forth the cellence of others, contributed largely to the luence which her graceful loveliness and unpaired beauty still exercised; but still she ttered among all those her fascinations atcted round her, unloved and unmated.

Doubtless, there were many within the circle her potent charms, who could have loved, d gladly have wooed her to their arms; but ey were deterred by the popularity which emed to mark her as a prize for the highest; nd so left her to the "good matches," as, in Brighton parlance, two or three men of birth

drifted alone on the shore-
having carried off nearly all c

The worst part of this
Mr. Joblyn's long face, an
However, his words contair
quired attention; and the
Lady Leverton broke up her
made arrangements to sp
months at St. Germain-en-L

There they lived in calm
occasionally visitors from P
strict *cordon* between them
questionable English, and
gardes-du-corps who infeste

This retirement, thoug

almost rendered essential; and, without quite articulating the words, her heart responded to Lord Littleton's lines:

"Ah! what avails it to be young and fair,
To move with negligence, to dress with care?
What worth have all the charms our pride can boast,
If all in envious solitude be lost?
Where none admire, 'tis useless to excel;
Where none are Beaux, 'tis vain to be a Belle."

A great deal of *ennui* was the consequence. St. Germain failed to interest her, though offering many a field for the historical memories of bygone years. The forest with its hunting-lodges, its alleys and *étoiles*, where so many kings had chased the deer; the old terraces of a palace of Henry IV.; the pleasure-house near of Gabrielle d'Estrée; the pavillion where Louis XIV was born; the château where regal lovers had nestled, and our regal James had died, offered to her no further interest in their decay, or the devastation caused

passion which had raged with

The books of those fem who have delighted in reco of French kings, were unk was well for the purity of was so. The minuteness wi young lady-writer has investi of the *Grand Monarque*, woul placed even to the fair histor loves of an officer of the G rowly enquired into. Yet vi it exists; and the records ought to be as repugnant t the actors therein are th palace, as when filling a lowe

the leaves of the lime trees began to fall in eddying showers on the *parterre*, and the fogs rise from the Seine, she lost even the slight pleasure she had felt in the place, and began to count the days to the period at which it was settled the Count and Countess San Steffano should join them on their return from Germany, when they were all to proceed together to Brighton.

To feel herself once more amid the excitements and animation of Brighton at the latter end of a bright sunny October, was a most exhilarating circumstance to the partially-falling spirits of Mary; and she began to look for the winter's gaiety with all the vivacity of former years. There was one drawback to her excessive satisfaction. Mr. Joblyn, the Countess San Steffano, and her mother, all had hinted at the necessity of her marrying. She felt herself the desirability of the step, but it was discordant to her ears to be told so.

To make her attractions a medium of policy,



and yet, as if in furtherai
mended to her, there w
method in her coquetry
been visible.

There is a fearful law
men and women, called "
the ban *passée* is pro
who after a certain numb
found unmarried. One
what that epithet would i
woman of eight and tw
better looking than she
the adjective attaches t
first whispered at the o
circle, and by those whc

And this blighting word was used when the once supreme Mary was spoken of! While even those who saw her lovely and attractive as before, and felt that she was more than ever engaging, bowed to the decree of the men and women who legislate in these matters. Such is the penalty undergone by those whom the world's voice proclaims a beauty. Little ugly things may grow grey in the service; and season after season finds them still dancing their dance, and singing their song, and no one passes a depreciating comment. But suns must set.

So fondly had Mary been cherished in the circles she had adorned, so perfect had been her reign, that it gave a sense of stability; and it was long before the truth broke upon her mind, that her position was changing—changed.

It is true that she saw younger girls receiving homage; and found herself forgotten in the formation of a quadrille, or it may be, her hand hastily engaged only at the moment of its



yet those, who, unled b
flocked round other idols,
find even this woman of te
delightful.

It is impossible to say h
ing *mirage*, which lent a
glories of her reign, woul
her eyes; for a sudden s
it, and made her perceive
while grossly exaggeratin
stances of her decadence.

At one of those balls,
after the manner of the L
Lady Patronesses weighe
scales of pride and prej

alone at the end of a sofa near a comfortably blazing fire. Her partner had left her, for the purpose of seeing a sister to her carriage; Lady Leverton was at the further extremity of the sofa, hearing from General Lovelace of the great perils the husband of a Lady Patroness incurred from excluded plebeians; thus Mary was left to her own resources for amusement. This was at once afforded her, by watching two very young men, who stood near, with their backs to the fire. They were elaborately dressed, and invested with all the consequence, which young things feel when their waistcoat studs cost eighty guineas, and a budding moustache transforms them, in their own opinion, into perfect Bluchers. They were quite unknown to Mary, and seemed but slightly acquainted with each other.

The question "J'unt?" was briefly asked by him of the moustache; which monosyllable, he of the studs, appeared to interpret correctly as the question, "Do you hunt;" and to which he



much entertained by the z
seemed bent on astonishi
exceeding fashion and high
not aware that there is a
between the unfledged a
who frequent such places
Paris, or even London.
restless until they can sho
are, or what they wish to
keep themselves in the
warily examining into th
others.

From hunting, the yo
subject of the people ther
rash assertions were oc

qualify by such explanation as—"That is—I met them in Paris," or, "We all went in the same steamer to Ostend," or, "I don't exactly know her myself—but my brother danced with her at the Duchess of St. Albans."

A good deal of gossip seemed to have been amassed by these very pea-green gentlemen; and they were evidently desirous of showing how perfectly they were instructed in all the *cancan* of the place. The young ladies were next discussed, or, as they were irreverently called by these *merveilleux*, "the Brighton girls." Mary was more than ever amused to hear how much was to be said of all; and sentences were pompously pronounced on their age, good looks, pedigree, and finance, down to their very shoe-tie.

At last, to her great horror, and with the axiom touching the penalty of listeners forcing itself on her mind, she heard her own name mentioned.

frank.

"No," was the answer;
necessary that this want of
be accounted for, the extenu
by the words, "I never saw h
I hear she is quite gone b
flower. They tell me she wa
of the Emperor of Russia, a
That shows she's no chicken."

"Ah! but she's a monstr
now," said the studded hero, e
admission of ignorance of the
what he knew very little abou
Vestris in that respect; and
got up, you might take her for

"Isn't she dressed ..."

several shots for a husband, though she has not a rap of fortune. They say she made such a dead set at Lord Bangor of the —th Hussars, that his mother came and took him away."

"Oh! Bangor's affair was nothing like the point she made at Adrian Henniker," replied the other. "His sister told mine that he had very nearly been taken in, but he found out in time that she hadn't a ducat, and so he bolted."

"Well, she gained a loss there anyhow," said the moustache, trying to be jocose; "for I hear Henniker is now in the Insolvent Court, waiting to be white-washed. And Otway of the Guards tells me that she is now setting her cap at old Standish of his regiment. Well, if she nabs him, I for one shall rejoice; but he is such a count, he won't go cheap, I take it."

At this moment the speaker stopped suddenly; and Colonel Standish approached, apolo-

You have burnt your fa
huge fire," he said, kindly, ju
crimson cheeks.

"Have I?" was the sim
habitual self-possession enabl
without the least show of
young detractors, who had so
unwillingly, pulled down the
so long kept her in utter un
the world could say ill-temp
herself.

A change came over her
Her love of commendation, h
approbativeness had received a
she could not readily recover.
thought of th

tion, but now seemed fearfully to corroborate the opinion which she had learnt the world entertained of her.

It was as such—with the exaggeration of irritated feeling—that she construed the idle babble picked up, in that under-current of low gossip constantly running in all public places, by two boys. The world had little to do with it in this instance; and she erred in placing too much importance on idle words idly spoken.

Like all those lapped in prosperity, by whom the first reverse is considered conclusive, Mary felt that the pleasures of life had at once faded from before her; and she turned in loathing from the idea of those scenes of gaiety, which heretofore had yielded so much enjoyment.

The bankrupt millionaire commits suicide, when he finds that from henceforth he has to subsist on £500 per annum; though that income has formed a blessed sufficiency to his nearest neighbour. The beauty turns in equal



adulation than hersel
sphere in which to e
her affections. Howe
stars, whether of the s
or the ball-room; and
mills, when once the
and eulogium fails, th
dolorous.

It is a great mistake
discouraged by depreci
gate much from those
There is so much of s
with every thing said
fairly deduct half its w
or blame, and value it

own worth; but take it as our due. Justice never turned any one's head. In like manner, the knowledge of our weak points would disarm blame of much of its sting.

Epictetus said he was always tranquil under abuse, from knowing how much more might be brought against him. There was at once wisdom and humility in the remark. Indeed, nothing proves more the existence of much vanity, or a deficiency of worldly wisdom, than a great susceptibility as regards censure. If disapprobation moves us, it is because we have taken a higher step than others accord to us; or else because we forget that the detraction, which, if overheard, would harshly nip the budding vanities of all around, is often the mere result of flippancy, or perhaps the desperate resource of keeping up a flagging conversation. We should learn to receive the Lilliputian darts of small talk with a Gulliver's indifference; they may vex, but they ought never to wound. As long as we talk of people instead of things, we



" What pleasure,"
" can two or three pe
have no mutual estee
void of feelings as thei
What charm could th
without the aid of a li
fice of a third person i
pleasure of a *tête-à-t*
would otherwise be as
as he is weary of him
women of the same cl
the expense of the abse
envy: he thus animates
pay him in the same co
some imagination, and

whole life to cultivate the talent of *slandering gracefully.*"

Mary D'Arc had never said or done an ill-tempered thing in her life; and had no idea that both might be perpetrated from mere wantonness or vanity of spirit. Lulled by her own happiness, she had never yet awaked to the pleasure which half the world feel in laughing at the follies, or blaming the actions of the other half. People profess to do this without evil intent, and we will hope that it is so; otherwise the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury would apply to them with startling force. "If any of you are conscious that you have taken a malicious pleasure in making a brother's offences known, and injuring his credit, you may plainly perceive, that the blessing bestowed on the merciful is not for you; you must expect judgment without mercy if you have shown none."

Never having indulged in detraction *pour rire*, or in that satirical wit which is supposed



only regarding the M
she felt there had beer
She had suffered his a
sort of shrinking, on
of a Newfoundland
disgusted her, his stu
though perfectly reco
of his mother, the D
ball; and her retiring
Lord Bangor accompa
been Mary's perfect u
thing sinister on her
believed this retreat of
performed with a view
attentions which were ir

in the affair with Captain Henniker. People might have thought she had assisted in the deception under which he had laboured with regard to her fortune; and the idea sent the blood from her heart with a sickly feeling of dismay. She numbered over those who had since been assiduous in their attentions, and whom she had encouraged with the smiles and favour by which she paid and maintained her little court. Had they considered all this as attempts at inveigling them? Had they looked at their preserved freedom, as evasion of her sharpness, her art? And Colonel Standish—was it really believed she was endeavouring to attract him? Did he think so? Her temples throbbed and her cheeks burnt when she asked herself the question. She *had* thought that in all respects he would make a most eligible husband; she *had* mentioned this to her mother. She was, then, the wretched manœuvrer, as which, it seemed, people represented her! She



those who still courte
probably did so from a
or for the sake of old ac
she was exacting. Every
mortifying. And still s
words and considering
been uttered with abou
or reason, as influenc
Steffano's parrot when
sempre t'amero."

CHAPTER IV.

"Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."

WORDSWORTH.

LADY LEVERTON never knew what was the inciting cause of her daughter's sudden wish

strongly urged by Mr. Joblyn; that the revenue of the Viscount inadequate to the life of dissip had adopted. The plan had inattractive to the indulged Mary was laid aside; but, now tha brought it forward, and, from change of taste, showed so mu the subject, it was speedily arra pleted.

An Admiral and Mrs. Caltho making some stay at Brighton, v of recommending a pretty cot immediate neighbourhood. Th of itself sufficient to decide Lady

who felt young while coquetting with Mary; and Mrs. Calthorpe, was one of those idle and indulgent wives, who look to any one who can occupy and entertain a desultory and rather tiresome husband, as a boon from destiny. She had, accordingly, courted and got up an intimacy with Mary, as she had done with many attractive girls before; and did much to induce the Viscountess to choose Deirham for a residence.

Mrs. Calthorpe was most extraordinarily devoid of jealousy; and seemed to feel as much satisfaction when she saw the Admiral playing chess with a beautiful girl, or hanging enchanted over some warbling syren, as a nurse might suppose to be, when she deposits a tiresome baby in its cot for the night.

On Admiral Calthorpe's return into Hampshire, he forwarded full particulars respecting the house that he had recommended to Lady Leverton. Mr. Joblyn ascertained that everything was right; and, in the merry month of



which it was built, stood t
of the cloisters of an abbey
flourished there.

What with the excitem
new residence, the necess
say nothing of the waning
Mary had never once reg
future life of comparative
was something in the sat
ings, of that nature wh
who abdicate an uneasy
this sense of dignified rei
the complacency which
consciousness of acting
This latter consideratio

In spite of the still rankling wound left by the discovery that unkind and derogatory things could be said of her, and also the idea that probably this country residence might prove a banishment from all that had heretofore given her pleasure, a sensation of happiness sprang up in her bosom as they drove through the bright green meadow, in which their cottage stood, and her eyes rested upon the lilacs and laburnams in the garden, the early roses covering the house with rosy blossoms, the picturesque arches twined with ivy wreaths, and the bright blue sky above, with considerable admiration; though, in truth, all that she saw resembled the impossible, and little gaudy landscapes one sees on Worcester china, or in young ladies' albums.

By the care of the Calthorpes everything which could conduce to their comfort was provided; and Mary, when she retired for the night, as she peeped through her pretty white

caused by the novelty of silence a
passed over her.

Her eyes wandered with a pleasec
over the unusual objects which m
On the right, at the extremity
which was only separated from th
iron hurdles, the grey ruin stood
moonlight—the very moment in
it—as the cow-house, profanely bu
base, was now hid in the shad
while, through the ivy-decked arc
seen the swift flowing river, sendi
lustre to the pale, fair moon. On
ground rose; and there, crownin
eminence, and embowered in lofi
seen the square tower of the chur

rtant feature in such domiciles—a huge ner bell—shone out full in the moonlight, if taunting, with its modern smartness, e old church with its grave and retiring pect.

There were other buildings visible; and here d there lights glowed through the curtains of e upper chambers, contrasting with the pale diance which eclipsed them. One by one ey were extinguished; and Mary, too, closed r curtains, and laid her head on her pillow, th as calm, as pure a heart, as any vil- ge girl who reposed within those latticed sements.

This doubtless would be a contested point many, who would look at the last ten years her life, passed in a series of dissipations, ten years of accumulated impurity, if not of ce. But it is not thus that the empty and littering amusements of what is called fashion- ble life affect the generality of women, where here is no startling tendency to evil in the

natural character. Nothing can be urge favour of such a method of passing thro existence. It deadens the best feelings; teaches its follower to place the most ridicu importance on trifles; it circumscribes the v as it were, to the transactions of a theatr the utter disregard of the things of heaven the things of earth; it is a sedulous and ergetic ingathering of flowers, whilst leavin the best fruits of life to wither on their st Still it is not vice. It lacks even the dignit crime. Besides, there is a business—a b in the pursuit of pleasure, that with its cons occupation leaves the heart but little leisure evil; and vice, as well as virtue, requires a unoccupied.

Austere people may laugh at the asserti but there is, in truth, a strict morality in t dissipations, to which young women are led mothers and fathers; influenced probably much of that feeling which sends flowers horticultural shows, "four-year-olds" to Eps

and fat cattle to Smithfield. It cannot be denied that there is sometimes more of an utilitarian principle than mere exhibition in their views; and to many far-sighted parents it is possible that the ball-room or opera may officiate as the slave market. Still there is the most faultless propriety in all this. We will not pause to examine into its basis.

"Oft when the world imagine women stray,
The sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way
Through all the giddy circle they pursue,
And old impertinence expel by new.

* * * * * * * *

With varying vanities from every part,
They shift the moving toy-shop of their heart."

We may, however, look to something further, than the guidance of the poet's sylphs in protecting women in dissipated society from blame, or the cause for blame. It is doubtless owing to the system of strict

which—while all things go r
monster smile—would with i
fright the most restive into
And this *espionage* lasts no
assembly lasts, but it enters
dwelling under all the Prote
Fouquet, or any other arch-inst
would never have dreamt of
morning drive, the ride, the
into every occupation, every
was a time when public opinio
in stringent rules on this latte
considerably from the tolerance

To have admitted the fact
some of the books, which no

reading was not the fault of the period. Poor Madame de Staël's "Corinne," and Madame de Cottin's "Claire d'Albe," with all their milk-and-water sentiment, were scouted from the feminine library with a fury, which perhaps would not be ill-spent on some of the novels of Dumas, George Sand, Sue, and others; and which, in their pretty covers, lie like green and blue serpents amidst the crotchet and Berlin work of our English women. Alas! could they but know how insidious, though sure the pollution, how irremediable the stain which exhales from those pages; could they but know that it is not more impossible to replace the purple bloom which a touch takes from the ripened plum, than to restore the film of innocence and purity, which lends to them their best beauty; how would they shrink from the debasing fiction — from literature which sinks the proud islander to the level of the French *grisette*.

Too much warning cannot be offered on

this point; and enquiry would show that every reader of the exciting and passion-moving pages of French fiction, might confess with the dram-drinker, that even if it did no further evil, it vitiates the taste to that degree, that no simpler or purer draught is palatable after. Englishmen should raise their voices against the admittance of such writings into their homes,—writings which would almost make the Confessor a desirable visitant. They denaturalize their country-women, if they do not demoralize. And, though they may powerfully shew the difference between the French and the English character, is it better for their wives and daughters to be in ignorance of their perfect dissimularity, than to learn it from those books which, while showing that it is the bent of the nation to dress up the grossest feelings of humanity with rose wreaths, and then worship them, might wake and establish the sin-taint in themselves?

A critic on French novels has said:—

"There are certain seasoned meats that are only excellent in proportion to the swollen and unhealthy intestines of the bird from which they are torn," and it would really appear that the livers of the Strasbourg geese, could scarcely be more preternaturally diseased than the imagination of a French novelist, to which they are likened. The success of some of Sue's writings may be considered as the best proof of the condition to which French literature has fallen.

The difference between English and French romance writers can be thus characterized. That, while the one loves to paint the wild mountain-stream, the artificial lake, the marble fountain, or the village duck-pond—all be it understood being clean water;—the other revels in describing the city river, with its tributary sewers, the fetid marsh, the life-destroying waters of the Dead Sea, or the scented bath of a Parisian Lais.

To revert to our assertion of the propriety of

much to the watchful, we ma
eye of half its constituents—t
being ever the most scanc
must be laid to the score o
titude, usually resulting fr
either in men or women : and
some married women might
which easy husbands and ga
them, the single could and
amidst the pitfalls of dissipatio

This is a long digression
beautiful and exquisitely-mann
though with much of her
numbed, not destroyed, by i
world that tramples on natu

an acute sense of the courtesies of life, indifferent to its duties—though cherishing every evidence of liking, careless to deeper feeling—though, in short, worldly, superficial, and one may add *blasée*, still rested that night on her country pillow as pure in heart and in feeling as the village saddler's pretty daughter, whose pride lay in the brightness of the brass plate on their shop-door, whose pleasure was in the crimson-flowered cactus, blooming among the horse-collars and blacking-bottles in the window, and whose hopes rested on some vague dream of felicity which an angel might have whispered to her.

The village of Deirham was one of those favoured ones, which, from beauty of situation and healthiness of air and soil, had collected around it a variety of charming residences, suiting a variety of circumstances, from those of the rich country gentleman, to the economising half-pay officer.

This luxury of neighbours had its advantages

them resisted classing, feeling
a great whole; and, conseque
a visiting list was not an
Calthorpe was to arrange
Viscountess, professing for
people of Deirham her wish
and with little visiting; and t
she gave some hints as to th
bours who were least eligible
As is usual, those were the v
but the plea of delicate heal
trouble of receiving them,
excuse for her delay in
visits.

Life in a village fully satisfi

making the most of the soft June zephirs, ere the mower's scythe should cut down and stop the coquettry with which, now lowly bending, now lightly waving, they seemed to woo its breath—the sparkling stream with its chalk laden lighters, spreading one broad sail to aid the splashing paddle worked at its stern—the rose-covered cottage, nestling in some sheltered nook, with its paved brick walks garnished on each side with all the gaudy and odorous *appanage* of a cottage garden—the village blacksmith's open work-shop, offering an exact counterpart, with its ricketty grindstone and dismantled plough, to the pencil studies she had so carefully copied in her youth—all this was delightful. And she glided amidst this home scenery, glowing with excitement at the freedom it afforded, while at times tremulous and almost startled at the novel sensations of perfect loveliness.

A threatened dinner party was a little to interrupt the "stand-at-ease" character of her

occasionally passed in her walks
in making a party tiresome.
with whom she had already spe
had warned her that it would l
prepared for the realization with
the same idleness of spirit which
its blight over country visiting.

CHAPTER V.

"The circle form'd we sit in silent state,
Like figures drawn upon a dial-plate;
Yes, ma'am, and no, ma'am, utter'd softly, show
Ev'ry five minutes how the minutes go;
Each individual suffering a constraint,
Poetry may, but colours cannot paint.
* * * * * *
The visit o'er, with ecstacy we come,
As from a seven years' transportation, home.

COWPER.

Mrs. Calthorpe considered that a dinner, given to what might be called the authorities of the place, would be the measure best calculated

sideration of the dislike co
anything impromptu—givi
were sent to the Rector,
daughters; to Sir Henry A
and member for the county,
dowager, who might almost
trate and member for th
vigorously did she co-operat
her son; to a Mrs. Gordon, t
member, living in Deirham
her ward, a rich East Inc
Curate of Deirham and to t
their wives, brothers in arm
fly-fishing; which last-name
them to settle with their wi

pretty haunts on their road to the Admiral's, who lived about five miles from the village, even the worldly Mary could not help wishing that part of the next four hours might have been spent in lounging amongst the bright blossoms, which sent forth their fragrance to the evening sun, instead of joining a party of indifferent people, met together, doubtless, with the same listlessness and apathy as affected herself. The idea of the dullness she was to encounter, was by no means lessened by experience.

The Rector of Deirham and his family, were the prototypes and anti-types of Rectors and their families past and to come. He was gentlemanly and courteous, and perhaps approximating more to the character of the Squire of the parish, than the Priest. Still he officiated ably in the pulpit; and denounced murder, theft, and such like crimes, with a freshness of idea as if the decalogue had only just dawned upon him, and was not at that very moment staring all his

flock in the face, in characters of pale and gold. His pursuits were innocent, those suiting country life; his pleasures sc But, though of a convivial disposition, an what Admiral Calthorpe called the "ta port school," all his proceedings wer keeping with the perfect moderation w marked his doctrines; a moderation, it ma added, extending to his wife, who, conscio irreproachable gentility, and the annual dis sation of fifty flannel-petticoats in the pa smiled in Mechlin lace and grey satin, a pe model of tranquillity for Rector's wives. girls were just those blind kittens of soc met everywhere; well-dressed, well-mann and well-forgotten the instant they ce dropping out all the *phrases banales*, w composed their discourse.

Mary D'Arc regretted this lay-figure prop in the Miss Harcourts. They were her nea neighbours; and her sociable spirit had alr planned an alliance in walks and purs

But she felt that they shrunk from her without having the least idea of the cause, never dreaming that it was owing to the impression of her superiority over themselves. Ex-idols are perhaps more easily repulsed than the less courted; as it was, Mary despaired of even instituting a moderate degree of acquaintance with them.

As to Sir Henry Acton, who had been directed by Mrs. Calthorpe to lead her to the dining-room, she felt that there was the same sort of invisible fence between them. She was not aware that his mother was for ever instilling warnings against young ladies, with the same earnestness that little Red Ridinghood's mother did against wolves; but she could have vouched for the good effect of her councils, as shown in the sort of prepare-to-guard manner of the Baronet. This repulsive demeanor was in a measure satisfactory to Mary, and rendered her own course of conduct easy; as, since that painful moment when she had

heard herself aspersed as husband-hunter, she had resolved on maintaining the most rigid reserve with bachelors.

She had little difficulty that evening in carrying out that determination; as the only single men present, besides Sir Henry and the Curate—who, scarcely lifting his grave, clerical eye, as he was presented to Lady Leverton and herself had seemed to shrink away with his very ill-cut coat, as if contact with strangers were painful to him—was a Mr. Regulus Tarleton, a literary squire, and who had quoted Byron on bread-and-butter Misses so often, that he seemed actually to think they were made of the material.

The Hussars did their duty as military agreeables; and talked about "ours," and all thereunto belonging, with a vivacity that very much lessened the awful kind of stillness which it is to find silence, or, at best, low whispering in a room containing sixteen people. Their wives, two agreeable, fashionable girls, who,

to ensure a perpetuity of the gaiety of military life once tasted at Canterbury, had made the egregious mistake of marrying men who only waited for their marriage portions to quit it, were kind hearted and courteous; still Mary thought the only endurable part of the evening was, when, having sang the two songs exacted by Mrs. Calthorpe, she found herself at chess with the Admiral, receiving his old-fashioned devotion, and dexterously check-mating him.

The whole thing, however, left a gloom upon her spirits. It was new to her to be with people who neither liked, nor pretended to like her. The frigidity under which country people try to hide the natural timidity which the disuse of society entails on them, was beyond the scope of her experience; and dissatisfied—it may be mortified—she fully acquiesced in the Viscountess' proposal during their drive home, that they should but seldom undertake the *ennui* of country dinners.

Lady Acton felt really sorry
tinguished and dignified a young
stand confessedly without fortun
that her labours as magistrat
for the county might be conside
by such a coadjutrix. The Ha
she was much too fascinating
place of playfellow to the Adm
Mrs. Calthorpe took care sh
vacant, but usually filled by t
eminently attractive.

Mrs. Bertie Clive and he
Marsden, wondered what could
Lady Leverton to have thoug
so superior a person as her

ing as good as Malibran's, whom he had once heard at Oxford; and felt it was a gift to be prized or feared. Miss Stratton, Mrs. Gordon's ward, had looked and listened to the unconscious Mary the whole evening, hoping that some day she would take her to her intimacy; while Mr. Regulus Tarleton after much serious consideration, decided that Miss D'Arc must surely be classed with such heroines of Lord Byron as Medora, Gulnare, and the unfortunate young lady consigned like a supernumary kitten to the Dardanelles, rather than with the aspersed Misses of his later poem.

In two months from this first dinner, all those kinder feelings had pierced like the snow-drop through the frost-bound soil of country-bred people's manners, and Mary feeling herself liked and courted, found that society still had its attractions; and again she was the kind and courteous companion, the actual belle of Deirham and its neighbourhood.

There was but one exception to the suavi and zealous kindness with which she w cherished. The very precise and Revere John Leigh, the Curate of Deirham, had eith from inadvertency, or excess of zeal, or wa of manner, established a degree of coldne between Miss D'Arc and himself, infinitely mo difficult to be thawed than the ice of n acquaintanceship.

She had met him one morning at M Gordon's, whither the affectionate, thou timid, little heiress had often lured her. T conversation had turned on the circumstan of a part of the carving of the church havi fallen during the afternoon service the Sunc before. The usual duties of Mr. Leigh k him to a sort of school-room chapel, establish at a very distant part of the parish, for t benefit of a colony of charcoal-burners a gravel-diggers, and which had increased much in importance, that Heathfield gra pits now almost aspired to the dignity o

village; but on the Sunday in question he had officiated at the church. The Curate had not often addressed Mary, indeed had been but seldom in her society, but still she was disposed to think highly of him; and she had once gone so far, as to suggest to Mrs. Bertie Clive, who could see no use in a man dressing so like a Methodist preacher, that probably he was too occupied with his duties, to think of the very reprehensible fashion and texture of his garments, or to know that his tailor, poor Joe Sims, the parish clerk with ten sickly children, was not quite in a position to compete with Stultz.

On Mrs. Gordon mentioning that the displaced corbel had fallen close to Lady Leverton's pew, Mr. Leigh, turning to Mary, inquired whether it had not alarmed her. With the same lightness of tone with which she would have excused her non-attendance at the opera, Mary said:

"Oh! I never go to church in the after-

noon." She then added playfully, "Must ask you to give me absolution, Mr. Leigh, for this *péché mignon?*" for she had seen the kind look with which his first question had been asked, merging into coldness and gravity.

Not satisfied, however, with the tacit censure which looks implied, Mr. Leigh said, with some little acrimony:

"I am afraid, Miss D'Arc, that any one who can ask so lightly for any office of the Church, is precisely the one to whom it should not be extended."

The colour mounted quickly to the cheeks of Mary, and a little flash of anger shone in her eyes. She felt that by far too serious a construction had been placed on words, which half the world might have uttered with as little meaning as herself; and she conceived there was bad taste in the correction.

Exactly the same idea passed over the mind of Mr. Leigh. He felt angry with himself at having just at this moment cavilled at a form

of expression, which however misapplied, had often met his ear without eliciting comment, and in this instance assuredly had been spoken as words of usage. And now, in his turn, the consciousness of mistimed severity sent the blood to his temples, and an angry expression was visible in his countenance.

A kind of panic came to the heart of Mary. Since her residence at Deirham she had already occasionally felt, and more particularly at Mrs. Gordon's house, that however perfect her previous life had rendered her in all the little economies of society, there was a tone of religion—an interest in the spiritual welfare of others—a repudiation of aught approaching to levity, in which she did not participate, or indeed, quite understand. She might now have been guilty of a graver error than she believed. With innate good breeding, or good temper—they are almost synonymous—her impulse was immediately to repair her fault; and with a

touching, serious look of regret in her usually laughing and loving eyes, she said:

"I am so very sorry, Mr. Leigh, that I have inadvertently displeased you. I hope that you will forgive me. I hope that you will accept my sincere apology."

The quick transition from the air of *hauteur* with which his words had been received, to the unaffected humility with which she now spoke, seemed for the moment to take away his power of replying; and Mr. Leigh gazed with a startled, inquiring look on the downcast loveliness before him.

Mrs. Gordon mistook his silence as Mary did. Both set it down to a difficulty he felt in so quickly dismissing his sense of disapproval. Mrs. Gordon, to encourage Mary, who she saw was really hurt, said good-humouredly:

"Never mind, Miss D'Arc. You will soon find, as we all have done, that it is for our good, and in pure kindness, that Mr.

Leigh sometimes appears rather a strict disciplinarian."

The words were well meant, but mistimed. The Curate could better have softened the effect of all that had passed. As it was, he suffered Mrs. Gordon's apology to pass for his own; and he rose to depart, leaving to Mary the impression, that, as even the light-hearted words of friendly intercourse could not be passed over with indulgence by Mr. Leigh, it would be pleasanter to avoid him; whilst he bore away with him the disagreeable reflection, that to an unreflecting but amiable young woman, he had shewn a strictness more likely to prejudice than to win. He also felt, that like an unskilful fisher, by a clumsy use of the opportunity lent him, he had frighted rather than lured to the net, which it was the unique purpose of his being to spread, one, of whose alienation from the things belonging to her peace he had before felt convinced.

For some time Mary could not forget that she had received correction from one, who, though by position authorized to reprove, had not made it less disagreeable by manner or conciliation; and, from an instinctive dread of a repetition of perhaps similar offending and similar chiding, she avoided making such frequent calls on Mrs. Gordon, where she knew there was much chance of her meeting the Curate. Indeed, to her it appeared that the whole affairs of the parish were settled at the Manor House; and she never went up the drive leading to the old-fashioned porch, that she did not see coming from a thick walk of evergreens which led to the offices, disastrous looking people, with tin cans in their hands. However, she less missed the pleasure which these visits to Mrs. Gordon, and the kind hearted little Miss Stratton, might have afforded from the circumstances of having formed an intimacy with a family in the neighbourhood

Deirham, who were absent from home at the first arrival of Lady Leverton at the Arches.

Captain and Lady Eloisa Essenden were decidedly the most agreeable people Mary had met since the commencement of her country campaign; and, by the subtle operation of those chords which draw hearts together, a strong and mutual liking sprung up. Finding much attraction in each other's society, much intimacy ensued; and that, too, in spite of the seven miles which separated High Down Place from Deirham.

Lady Eloisa was a pretty, delicate woman, of about thirty, with enough of worldly habitudes to lead her to make a demonstration of courtesy and kindness even where indifferent; but she also possessed a tender and loving nature, which poured itself forth with affectionate delight on all those by whom it was awakened.

The loveliness and unaffected grace of Mary,

seconded as they were by a freshness a[illegible] warmth of manner as yet unchilled by h[illegible] long encounter with a chilling world, at on[illegible] placed her among the idols of Lady Eloisa[illegible] capacious heart—a heart which was a ver[illegible] Pantheon of Divinities; her husband and si[illegible] beautiful little children occupying, however, the [illegible] most important inches.

Mary responded ardently to every symptom of regard; and, though at times wondering at that excess of maternity in the character of Lady Eloisa, who seemed to consider babies in all their bearings, as unborn, newly born, or some time born—the one great interest of womanhood, and most exquisite of possessions—she still entered with great good will into all her new friend's labyrinth of nursery love.

With Captain Essenden, Mary was as great a favourite; and, perhaps as regards a community of tastes, and the power of being most agreeable to each other, there was better founda-

tion for the good companionship which existed between them. They sang, they rode, they danced together whenever the opportunity occurred, or Captain Essenden could make one; he, charmed to find some medium between the very silent young ladies, and the very garrulous old ones of the neighbourhood; she, as pleased to find a gentlemanly, agreeable person, with whom she could feel intimate, without incurring the degrading suspicion of an attempt at luring him into marriage.

Captain Essenden was a constant visitor at the Arches; and, though he found Admiral Calthorpe seated there at chess, much oftener than was agreeable, seeing that a ride of fourteen miles had been undertaken for the purpose of trying some music, which the Admiral's *exigence* prevented, still there was some pleasure even in walking round a drawing-room so forcibly bearing testimony to the elegance of those who occupied it; and what with a little

chat with the gentle Viscountess, and some peeping into work boxes and portfolios, or witnessing the charming fury with which Mary would set about retrieving some lost advantage in her game of chess, possibly produced by some passing words from himself, the time was still spent pleasantly; and he and the old Admiral would walk down to the inn, where they had left their respective horses, all but singing *io pæans* for the great boon which the residence of Lady Leverton was to their neighbourhood. Chess, however, always seemed to leave the most satisfaction in the feelings, and in this respect, certainly showed a superiority over more desultory amusement, in spite of what Bishop Beveridge says against it.

"Either 'tis a lottery or not. If it be not a lottery it is not lawful; because 'tis a great presumption and sin to set God at work to recreate ourselves. If it be not a lottery, then it is not a pure recreation; for, if it depends

man's wit and study, it exercises his brain and spirits, as if he was about other things. So that, being on one side not lawful, on the other side no recreation, it can on no side be lawful."

Cowper asks, who

> "Would waste attention on the chequer'd board,
> His host of wooden warriors to and fro,
> Marching and counter marching, with an eye
> As fix'd as marble, with a forehead ridg'd
> And furrow'd into storms, and with a hand
> Trembling, as if eternity were hung
> In balance on a pin?"

This might all be true; and yet how much more of harmony there appeared in the homeward bound meditations of the Admiral, than in those of Captain Essenden. The one sat square on his huge chesnut mare, occasionally flipping away the flies from her ears, as he jogged quietly along. A contented smile rested

ager them to get on half so w
The Admiral's bump of self-es
and might a little have militate
curacy with which he judged of l
pleasing; but it kept him in g
all the world; who then coul
less?

The homeward gallop of C
was performed in a very differe
pendant twig of the wild clem
in the hedgerows between wh
remorselessly cut off by his
twigs failing, was as unscrupul
the flanks of his horse. Then
forward — then the sudden c

groom; who clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth, expressive of pity, and reckoned, "Master have had a good twenty mile of it, to have taken so much out of the bay."

CHAPTER VI.

"If much converse perhaps
Thee satiate, to short absence I could yield:
For solitude sometimes is best society,
And short retirement urges sweet return.
But other doubt possesses me, lest harm
Befall thee severed from me."

MILTON.

THERE is in some women, particularly in wives—a wilful shutting of the eyes to consequences, which would be difficult to understand, were not the solution offered by the reflection, that half the actions of half the world,

have only reference to their individual satisfaction, however much of the gloss of disinterestedness they may carry on the surface. Those of Lady Eloisa and Mrs. Calthorpe were in this category.

Mrs. Calthorpe had married the Admiral at that period of a woman's life, when she is allegorically described as being on her "last legs." It usually happens that with these "last legs" the habits and opinions of a woman are all formed. It was so in the present case; and Miss Aviston could scarcely have been induced to change her state, but for the wealth and position which that change promised to afford.

Mrs. Calthorpe was very fond of reading novels, of writing long letters, and of a quiet drive in her pony chair, to make quiet calls on those friends from whom she could collect materials for her letters; or, in default of stirring events in the neighbourhood, talk over her novels. After a walk through the green-houses and

dressing-rooms. Now, the A
amuse himself; therefore, unl
out that for his day, which w
company and entertainment,
back on her, to the infinite d
reading, letter-writing, and
Rather than reduce him to
most actively for his day's
usual resource was ensuring
agreeable young woman in th

People at times had tho
anxiety for his amusement, M
sometimes submitted the Ad
attractions rather subversive
a wife; "*Mais elle s'y conn*

his nature to form an exclusive attachment, his marriage with herself having been the result of pique and the desire of vengeance; therefore, she had no inquietudes on this point. But if, however, she found that a permitted influence seemed likely to assume a greater force than she deemed politic, she had only to set a counteracting attraction, to put all to rights. This was seldom necessary, she chose so well her subjects; and flattered by the attentions of a good-looking old man, and pleased by his homage, the young ladies flirted and amused themselves with the mockery of a sentiment, rendered harmless by the countenance and connivance of his wife.

Though productive of the same results, Lady Eloisa Essenden had other reasons for sending her husband to the highways for his amusement—reasons dictated by the warmest love. Still they were selfish. And while in the devotion of her loving heart, she could not

bear that aught of excitement or variety should be wanting to enliven the existence of one, who she felt had sacrificed much of the world's pleasure for her sake; she could not resolve to give up the exquisite interests of her nursery to enter into the pursuits suited to his taste and which in fact had been the first link in the chain which had bound them to each other.

With vain sophistry she taught herself to believe, that, in devoting herself to her children she was indirectly acquitting herself of her every duty to him; and that it were really better for the husband and the wife to seek their day's amusement in different paths, so that they should meet with renewed feelings of interest in the evening, when affection and ideas would be all the fresher for the temporary absence. This sounded plausible; and in circumstances where a profession or a decided pursuit lead to the quotidian division, it may be

productive of all such effects. But when the separation is for the furtherance of distinct pleasures, the evening meeting rather fails in the results looked for by such sanguine calculators.

If there has been aught of excitement in the day's amusement—that excitement must droop when the circumstances which produced it fail; and in most cases where the events of the morning have been of stirring interest, home is sought merely as the necessary halt that must intervene between the pleasures of another day, when that excitement may be renewed.

A wife or a husband must be rich in attractions, fertile in resources for imparting pleasure, to be able to get up sufficient interest and amusement to counterbalance the re-action which ensues after any vivid delight; and failing that, they share in the dull aspect which home assumes to those who have encountered exciting moments elsewhere. It were wiser to

avoid the chance, by "hunting in couples," as sportsman would say. Better the *ennui* constant association, than the separate interes which spring up, where separate pleasures a sought and found, openly and decidedly. Affe tion fails, in the jar which such distinct proce ings produce; and the division of feeling whi ensues, makes of the fair land of wedded li a very Norfolk Island of hopelessness and d peration. There are certain and unavoida differences in the occupations of married peo involved by the difference of sex; but woe those who seek not to approximate, where jo pleasures are feasible.

In the very face of the possibility of attendant mischance, Lady Eloisa Essen would pass whole days in the sweet care watching over six of the loveliest little childr that ever gambolled over a lawn, or waited wi the pretty *gourmandise* of babies, for th strawberry the taper fingers of the mother wer gathering; a mother who never left them

voluntarily, until a vile dinner bell told her that the soup and her husband waited for her in the dining-room. And even then she would delay, casting lingering looks on the least of the little band capering naked in its bath. Did she, then, not love the husband, who smiled indulgently as her maid brought forgotten detachments of her *toilette* into the dining-room; her dressing probably having been undergone in the nursery? Yes, she loved him intensely, devotedly. Her union with him had been one bright dream of felicity; and the prayer of thanksgiving that lingered on her lips at the close of each calm day of happiness, named him as her best earthly treasure.

Still, with the passion of maternity so strongly developed in her bosom, she could but obey its dictates. She justified to herself the neglect of her husband for his children, by the fact that her devotion to them was in truth devotion to himself. Men do not quite understand such indirect testimony of affection.

Hubert Essenden must have been decidedly born under a feminine planet; and from his earliest infancy he seemed destined to reap all the worship and indulgence, which the female half of creation are so pleased to lavish on their idols. His father, who was an inveterate politician to the absorption of all other interests, gave him up entirely to the charge of his mother, who gladly centered all her cares and complacency on this her youngest child and only son, while his four elder sisters vied who should most cherish their lovely little brother. Until eight years, which is one year beyond the period assigned by the governors of the French kings for boys to remain under female superintendence, he shared the instructions of his sister's governess, a lady too intelligent not to understand and imbibe the spirit of the family, as regarded making an idol of her charge.

The art of reading and writing was administered in the most imperceptible doses. He gambolled his way into geography and French,

while music and dancing were thrown in by the same ineffable process; and, without the aid of scales or practising dull exercises, the little fellow was soon an able musician. This halcyon state of things was suddenly brought to an end by sweet little Hubert one day kicking his governess. A German tutor was engaged; but he did little besides filling the house with the fumes of tobacco, and his pupil's mind with all the dreamy horrors of the legend of the *Ratenjager*.

Eton was the next resource. It seemed a cruel measure towards the pampered child; but even there flowers seemed to spring in his path, and what with the Brocas, Surley Hall, the Montem, the Shooting-gallery in Windsor, and Leyton's ices and mareschino, time went merrily.

At length, the superintending power of the College thought it necessary to comment on the little learning attained by young Essenden.

The concentred care of a private tutor was recommended. Among many, one was selected, a clergyman of education, whose preponderating advantages were, however, offered by his exquisite manners, and further enhanced by his possessing a beautiful young wife, who was a perfect collocation of all the talents, from mathematical perspective, down to the orthodox rap with the knuckles on her guitar, when executing *Bollero*. It might be whispered that an elegantly furnished room in the Rectory was not the least recommendation. Indeed, it was an inexpressible comfort to Mrs. Essenden to think that poor Hubert was not consigned to carpetless room, curtainless bed, and pewter washing implements; to which horrors she had heard pupils were sometimes subject. It was told her that even Archbishops, and Lord Chancellors, had gone through that fearful ordeal; but then probably they were coarse-minded youths; whereas Hubert was so refined, such

things would give him an atrophy, through disgust.

In two years from this period, Hubert Essenden entered the Grenadier Guards, a most delightful and accomplished creature; and, strange to say, with a temper softened, not spoiled by all the indulgence of his past life—a mind kept pure, not made effeminate by all the delicacy which had surrounded him.

The results of this rather *missy* education rendered him, as may be imagined, unfit for the general run of men's society. He preferred playing the guitar to hunting, sketching and painting to horse-racing. Men stigmatized his pursuits as "rot" and "humbug;" he found theirs troublesome, and uncouth. The ordinary style of women did not please him more than their male contemporaries. A fastidiousness of taste, made him at once shrink from the conventional slang and manners of the girls of his day; while his own experience in

such matters, made him speedily perceive h very superficial were all the talents brought bear in society, and how dependant on t different professors who held, as it were, t wires to all the pretty puppets who exhibi them.

A visit to the old Earl of Ilsea, just at t period when his heart, like a tired bird, fl tered wearily for the want of a resting-place, once presented the haven—the Elysium which it pined; and well the lovely Elo Audelys might have satisfied even higher i tions of feminine beauty, purity and intelligen than his own.

To the great surprise of every one who h witnessed the course of his education, and p nounced it as a very forcing frame for a ro Hubert Essenden at once declared for m riage. His father remonstrated, announc his intention and expectation of still livi thirty years; for which period the utmost

could allow him would be a thousand a year. Lord Ilsea also offered opposition on the score of his youth, for he was scarcely three-and-twenty. Hubert had never yet been contradicted, and he acted now as if all the objections were uttered in an unknown tongue. The consent of the two fathers was extorted from them by the sheer force of not understanding their refusals; and actually the lady's dower was paid, and the wedding accomplished, with all the splendour and publicity which one might have expected, had the two families sought the alliance.

Hubert Essenden had staked his happiness on the possession of Lady Eloisa, and the results showed that he had well calculated the chances. There was an actual atmosphere of wedded felicity surrounding them, tingeing everything that concerned them with happiness; and years, as they passed on, saw no diminution.

"Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in hi
glowing hands,
Ev'ry moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golde
sands;
Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all th
chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in mus
out of sight."

With the impression that one formed ornament and enjoy society should not be wit drawn from it, Lady Eloisa had done violer to her own love of solitude, in the care by wh she had ever drawn a circle of choice associa around them. Her children, offering an ev enduring interest, would have sufficed for her o daily pleasure; but until she had made so proviso for her beloved Hubert's amusem and happiness, she never felt at liberty partake of that tempting joy, which it is for t young mother to unite, as it were, the pla fellow and the nurse, and so pass merry nurse

hours with little things, who seem to spring into brighter intellect beneath her care.

With a view to her husband's pleasure, and which in reality was the motive for all her exertions as far as society went, Lady Eloisa eagerly fostered an intimacy with the Viscountess and her attractive daughter. In this instance her inclinations seconded her policy, and she experienced unfeigned interest in the society of one, who united with the fascination of high-breeding, an affectionate and mirthful heart. Mary received with cordiality every mark of regard; and while careful not to hurt the feelings of the Calthorpes by any neglect, and who as her first friends seemed to have a greater claim on her time, she yet contrived to pass much of it with the Essendens.

Lady Leverton exacted but little of her daughter's company. Her whole life had been one of reverie and abstraction; and she found in solitude a keener enjoyment, than when

called on by a companion to take note [illegible] passing events, which offered to her but litt[illegible] of direct interest. Content in the knowled[illegible] of her daughter's happiness, she required nothi[illegible] further than some pretty finger-occupation, [illegible] sunny room, and the luxury of recollectio[illegible]. It is not every mind that can thus fi[illegible]d enjoyment in retrospect. It necessitates a callous or a clear conscience. The memo[illegible]y of the good and still simple Tone, offered [illegible]ot one black shadow to affright her retrogra[illegible]de gaze, though there were points that sometim[illegible]es called for the tears of tender regret.



CHAPTER VII.

"The sweetest joy, the wildest woe is love;
The taint of earth, the odour of the skies
Is in it."

JAMES BAILEY.

ALTHOUGH Mary's intimacy with Mrs. Gordon and her ward had suffered some little check, and her dread of encountering one, who had made her feel something between anger and embarrassment—both annoying sensations—had rendered her visits to the Manor House infrequent, she still occasionally called there. She felt an interest in the little unfashioned heiress,

which gave her pleasure in all their meeting
and that too in spite of sundry little catechetic
queries from Mrs. Gordon. Some of the
she imagined might emanate from the Curat
still they troubled her, inasmuch as the dr
of them seemed to pronounce her less faultle
than people generally made a show of consid
ing her. The question one day put, w
she did not attend the afternoon service
the church, she felt convinced was prompt
by Mr. Leigh; and in consequence felt so
difficulty in replying. This she did, howev
perhaps with some little sacrifice of ingenuo
ness, by alleging that it always gave her
head-ache—that the church had become wa
and smelt of onions and peppermint—th
the school-children coughed, and that
these disagreeables took away her power
attention.

Miss Stratton listened to this list of d
abilities, with an expression of pity as intens
as if the obstacles to Mary's attending churc

were something as insurmountable as those of a back-woodsman; and the simple remark, "How sorry I am for you," called up a blush on Mary's cheek. It called for something more honest; and she said deprecatingly, "Perhaps it is my own fault; perhaps it may be owing to my thinking that going once to Church is sufficient."

Mrs. Gordon, who meaning always to say good-tempered things, uttered sometimes very silly ones, sometimes very sharp ones, said soothingly, "And perhaps Miss D'Arc may conceive that it was half, and not the whole of the Sabbath that was ordained to be hallowed and kept holy."

Miss Stratton looked hurt as she saw Mary's abashed countenance; who, too gentle-hearted to resent what pained her, too well-bred to utter light words on subjects which she knew were of such surpassing importance to Mrs. Gordon and her ward, said meekly,

"I have always thought it was sufficient

to abstain from the week's occupations to show one's sense of the holiness of the Sunday but I dare say I have thought too lightly of it."

Miss Stratton took her hand with tenderness as she spoke, and seemed to feel a vast accession of affection at the teachableness displayed by the beautiful creature before her. But she could not express it; timidity even there fettering her inclinations. To put an end to the little awkwardness which succeeded, Mary took her leave; cordially and kindly as regarded the ladies, but with a little leaven of malice against Mr. Leigh, whose pastoral care she saw in all this, though she was obliged to confess to herself, that in their occasional meetings he had abstained from all interference with her opinions or actions, shrinking at once from addressing her as long as it were consistent with good-breeding, and then only referring to the most common-place topics.

There was doubtless a little malice in the

pen-and-ink caricature which went that evening to the Countess San Steffano, wherein Mr. Leigh appeared with a length of visage eminently Tartuffean, while the effect of Joe Sims' oddly-cut coat, and the clumsy boots of the village shoemaker, were considerably enhanced. An early judgment followed this disloyalty. Who can say that all the witty, quizzing and satirical sketches of young ladies, are not some day visited on them? The question involves a "great perhaps," as Carlyle would say.

There was an anticipation of pleasure for the next day, which speedily effaced all the recollection of the Manor House mortifications. Lady Eloisa Essenden was to call for Mary, to take her to spend a few days at High Down.

A bright autumnal day had induced Lady Eloisa to bring her three eldest children; Mary therefore proposed, for their amusement, that they should take a walk on the banks of the

river. The children were delighted at the idea, and immediately after luncheon the little party set out.

They had proceeded some distance on the bank of the swift-flowing river, when the reached a beautiful bit of heathy turf, which sloped at once to the edge, where lay a pretty little painted skiff, secured by a chain to the shore. In an instant the two boys were in the boat, and going through the motions of rowing; and though the pebbles of the shallow water shone but a foot beneath the surface, they imagined themselves already extensive navigators, and shone as such in the eyes of the little girl who remained on the land.

As they lingered, watching the exertions of the children, Mr. Leigh approached. Mary had often heard Lady Eloisa speak in the highest terms of him, regretting that his parochial occupations kept him so close a prisoner to Deirham and its new settlement

at the Heathfield gravel-pits; but she never believed that the formal Curate could have elicited so warm a greeting as was now extended to him. It rather infected her own salutation, and she too offered her hand with kindness. He took it, but with a slight expression of surprise; which to Mary was a tacit shewing, that her usual distance of manner had been remarked.

To the earnestly expressed wishes of Lady Eloisa, that he would return with them, and spend one or two days at High Down, Mr. Leigh pleaded his many engagements as an excuse. This she combatted, adding playfully, that, however attentive to others, he ought not to be unmindful of herself and Captain Essenden; for, though almost extra parochial, they required as much looking after as his charcoal-burners, and that even Miss D'Arc, though she had the benefit of his preaching, was doubtless not so good, but that she could learn to be better. Mary felt that this was an embarrassing remark

to be made in her presence, all circumstances considered; but she was prevented hearing the answer which might have been made, by a violent burst of joy on the part of little Ellie, who stood clapping her hands in delight at having succeeded in pulling up the iron pin which held the boat-chain to the ground, and so setting her brothers afloat.

Lady Eloisa and Mary felt almost inclined to laugh also at the child's exultation; and the water just there looked so shallow, it seemed impossible that the boat could get beyond the reach of the boat-hook, which lay near. But on seeing an expression of alarm on the countenance of Mr. Leigh, as he made an abortive effort to catch the chain of the fast-receding boat, they imbibed the fears it seemed to bespeak.

"If the boat gets into the stream, I shall have difficulty in reaching it," he said hastily, at the same time throwing off his coat and neckcloth, and dashing into the water.

Mary could not help smiling within herself at the care evinced for the handywork of Mr. Sims; but the next moment showed the reason of the act, and the cause there was for apprehension. After walking about fifteen or twenty feet with the water but little above his knees, he was suddenly immersed to the neck, being evidently beyond his depth, and began vigorously swimming towards the fast-gliding skiff.

It was a moment of agony to the mother. She uttered no cry, but stood like a statue, with her hands clasped, gazing at the danger of the children; who, frightened in their turn, had drawn the oars within the boat, and sat shrieking piteously for help. That help was near; and in a few minutes—it seemed hours to those who watched his progress—the hands of Mr. Leigh rested on the boat. None but an Oxonian could have thrown themselves so lightly into it, without upsetting the cranky



Lady Eloisa and Mary had hastened
them ; and in a few minutes they were in
of the rejoicing mother, who seemed, in th
of her joy and thankfulness, inclined t
her embrace to the dripping Curate. I
she contented herself with the simpl
pressing with trembling agitation hi
within her own ; while her tearful eyes,
his face, seemed to speak the blessing
not articulate. He understood well th
gratitude ; and, bending, kissed her ha
tionately. At that moment, he perceiv
who had halted at some few paces dist
who, overcome with the terror the s
caused her, was actually sinking on h

with a ringing in her ears, appeared the prelude of a fainting fit.

The fact was, that Mary knew little of men's exploits by land or water. Swimming was an action to which she lent full credence, but had never witnessed. She saw Mr. Leigh plunge beyond his depth, with his head alone appearing above the water; and she believed that she saw a man drowning, and even then struggling with death. The sight had filled her with the most acute alarm, which the knowledge of his safety could not at once dispel.

The Curate in one moment was by her side, and, kneeling close to her, supported her in his arms, regardless of his dripping state, which rendered contact with him a doubtful advantage. Lady Eloisa removed her bonnet. The action seemed to revive her. A burst of tears—that very available and feminine resource in any excess of joy or sorrow, pleasure or fear—quite restored her. Mr. Leigh walked with the

ladies to the point whence the little boys' embarkation had taken place; and then, finding they were sufficiently composed to return to the Arches alone, he suggested that in his present plight it were better for him to seek his own home by the by-ways and fields; and gathering up his discarded and canonical wardrobe which he threw over his arm, he took his leave.

Lady Eloisa, holding her little boys in either hand, feeling as much thankfulness as their return from an Arctic voyage would have called up, was silent and trembling during their short walk to the Arches; but no particular demonstration of emotion took place, until, at her return to High Down, she had placed her children in their father's arms; and then her sobs and broken words seemed remorseful accusation of the thoughtlessness that had brought about the danger.

Mary felt equally perturbed; and until she was dressed for dinner and descending to the

drawing-room, where a large party were assembled, who were to dine that day at High Down, she did not lose a feeling of agitation, and an impression of something terrible having occurred.

As might be expected, after such preliminaries as the soup and fish, with meteorological observations—until which, neither dinner or conversation can be considered to have fairly commenced—all words and thoughts seemed occupied by the exploit of the Curate; and a man, who for the last two years had shown the moral courage of denouncing the errors of humanity—and therefore of his intimate associates—without exciting one enthusiastic feeling, was now suddenly elevated to the rank of a hero, for simply doing what any boatman's boy, who could swim, would have done in his situation.

The danger of the little boys,—the heroism of their preserver,—was expatiated on in every key

and cadence; the sensation being much enhanced by Captain Essenden relating, that, when at Eton, his own life had been saved by Leigh; who crowned the exploit by thrashing the bargeman, whose ferocity had occasioned the accident, after he had dragged him from the water.

Leigh's youthful valour received its meed of praise. One fact alone seemed to puzzle the hearers. Was it possible that the unfashioned curate had ever been an Etonian? The fact was attested by Captain Essenden, and rendered credible by the additional information, that his widowed mother had appropriated more than half her income to ensure her child the education of a gentleman,—a measure certainly more suited to her ambition than her means.

"Well, I never could have anticipated anything heroic in that long puritanical back," was Mrs. Calthorpe's smiling remark, and she looked at Mary, with whom she had before this, laughed at the uncourtly outlines of the curate. Mary

smiled in return, but it was faintly. A new light had burst upon her; and she was even then pondering on what it had revealed, though apparently listening to Sir Henry Acton's attempts at agreeable conversation; his mother having given him permission to play, what she called, his court cards.

In truth, the maternal genius presiding over him, struck with the unaffected elegance—the incontrovertible proofs of distinction in the person and manners of Miss D'Arc—had considered that, in spite of the deficiencies of fortune, she would form an admirable third in the triple alliance, herself, her son, and her son's wife must form.

Of late years there had been, in the decided spirit of coquetry with which Mary had made conquests, much of the same feeling that may lead a Sioux to seek scalps. They presented little of intrinsic value to either; but admirers are as essential in the train of a beautiful woman, as the scalp at the belt

of a war chief. The prowess of Mary ha[illegible] called down upon her that which she conceive[illegible] the most degrading accusations. To gua[illegible] for the future against such evil constructio[illegible] on her conduct, she was most indifferent a[illegible] slightly repellant in her demeanour towards [illegible] gay bachelors. The long fostered spirit of coquetting, now only betrayed itself in a generalizing sweep of the net woven by her attractions; while she shewed regard only to the Benedicts taken in the draught.

This evening Captain Essenden seemed bent on bringing to her attention, the "magistrate and county member" floundering within her meshes. He first quizzed her on the point with something almost of malice; and then, as if amused by her vehement denial of all interest in, or cognizance of, the Baronet's sentiments, he pursued the subject with so much bitter sarcasm on the man whose hopes he feigned to further, that Mary fancied there was more of ill-temper in the mockery, than she had given

Captain Essenden credit for. She, however, took most tranquilly his jibes on the mamma-directed lover. Indeed, the subject entered but little into her mind, already much and singularly pre-occupied; and, the evening ended, it was with much of gladness that she found herself in that dreamy and happy interregnum, when seated before their glass, young ladies, whose eyes have sparkled from glossy braids or hyacinthine ringlets, now look sleepily and softly forth from little lace night-caps.

People tell us that it is the wicked and the miserable who seek for solitude. There is still another class—the astonished. It was in this character, that Mary now rejoiced to find herself one.

She prepared to investigate the mystery which had puzzled her woman's heart, with the keenness which the phenomenon seemed to demand. Strange as it was, considering her late feelings, she could not conceal from herself that they were now occupied by one



all that statues and pictures had taugh
belonging to the dignity and beauty
It was to recal this image to her
that she had coveted to be alone, and
examine it narrowly and continuous
prove its identity; to ascertain that t
head so proudly set on the finely-formed
the beautiful oval of the face, marked
close curled whisker which met beno
chin; the expansive chest; the squ
shoulders, all developed by the w
clinging so close, were in reality the pe
owned by one, she had so hastily stigm
uncomely, base and churlish. There

had watched over her with an earnest tenderness; had whispered questions of solicitude, and those kind words which are spoken to the sick and suffering, with the same endearing simplicity which is used to the child.

It was here that her thoughts halted, and took pleasure in hovering over testimonies of interest, where she had believed she had excited nothing but disapprobation. It brought a glow of pleasure to her heart—a satisfaction difficult to describe—arising more from sensation than mental effort, and yet connected with reflection; insomuch that the genial feelings pouring into her heart sprung, or seemed to spring, from the minute retrospect and examination of one quarter of an hour passed with a dripping curate on the banks of the Deir.

Sleep was but a continuation of all this visionary association with one, whom a short day before she would scarcely have named as an

acquaintance; and the stirring of her heart within her seemed

> "Like those blind motions of the spring,
> That show the year is turn'd."

Dreams, with their contempt for the "unities," still seemed to increase all this, and made him even more than a friend. He hovered by her side; he sang with her; he read to her; he soothed her in grief; he shielded her from harm; and she awoke, as many a woman has awoke before, with a heart charged with something very like love, for a phantom—a sickly creation of the fancy woven on that very fragile canvass, a few kind words and looks from a well-made and handsome man.

There is more in the mysterious depths of a woman's feelings, than the most philosophical can ever expect to fathom. Like those cave-buried fountains, which can only receive *on*

their still bosoms, the sun's rays during that hour when it may have attained a certain altitude; so is it with the secret source of woman's love. Dark, unfathomed, and unknown, there is still an hour for its illumining —a point from which the fire of Heaven may reach it; and like the black waters of the hidden spring which borrow a golden radiance from the sunbeam, so does it wake to the light and life, which pervades the whole being with and sense of a satisfied existence.

Mary arose with the impression of new life — new perceptions; and her every step shewed that some change had passed over her.

As she entered the breakfast-room from the lawn—where she had been playing with the children—radiant with health and joy, Lady Eloisa and her husband thought they had as yet scarcely given her the full meed of admiration which her perfections demanded.

"Did you ever see anything half so lovely?" Lady Eloisa whispered to her husband, as Mary

approached them smiling, with a child dragging her back by either hand. Captain Essenden did not reply. That policy is questionable, which suffers a wife to take for subject of remark another woman's beauty; or to direct her husband's attention to the circumstance: but Lady Eloisa knew not the meaning of the word policy.

At breakfast they again spoke of the Curate. By an instinctive feeling that it was pleasing to Mary, Captain Essenden made him the chief subject of his conversation; and all he related of him told to his praise; whether of his noble bearing at school—of the uncompromising dignity with which he avoided all expensive pleasures at Oxford—or of the distinction he gained there. It appeared that there he had been a tutor to a cousin of Captain Essenden, with whom he had afterwards travelled; and who had given testimony to the affectionate nature of his heart and the vigorous solidity of his mind.

All this combined to drive still farther from the thoughts of Mary the identity of this marvel with the sour rebuker who had first affrighted her at the Manor House.

With the growing admiration and knowledge of his character, there had arisen an impression of a *rapprochement* between them, mystic and indefinable—but still there it was—one among the many subtile essences in that illusive laboratory, a woman's ardent heart. Its results were, as on the preceding night, a sense—rather than thought—of happiness; and she heard Lady Eloisa and her husband decide on sending a messenger to the Gravelpits to inquire for Mr. Leigh, and to beg that he would spend part of the day with them, with a delightful assurance that he would come; and that, like herself, he also had jumped, as it were, from the cold outposts of acquaintanceship to sympathy and friendship.

Mary had once heard from her nurse of

the country superstition, that souls destined far each other come down from the skies in pitchers. With the first touch of earth, the pitcher breaks; and the poor separated souls, are doomed to wander about in joyless singleness. They might—or they might not again meet. If they did, the perfection and felicity of their union, at once pronounced them *çi-devant* "pitcher companions." There was a smile at the recurrence of the notion—at its folly—at its futility; still with the smile came a happy notion, that there was something of pitcher community between herself and the metamorphosed curate.

Captain Essenden had claimed her promise of practising some Italian duets with him, and she complied with gladness. Song seemed the natural outpouring of the new joy which possessed her; and there was a harmony and force of expression in her tones, that astonished even herself.

In the beautiful duet, "*Amor possen* — *te*

nome," she identified herself with the love-bound Armida. She sang to a phantom Rinaldo; and as her clear voice, in accents springing from a heart then first touched with that power which lent to such words a greater force than did music, sang, "*Caro per te quest' anima, prove soavi palpite, ch' esprimere non so,*" there was a wild tenderness in her tones which thrilled to the very soul of the excitable Essenden.

The duet finished, there was a moment's silence. It was broken by something like a cough—a sigh—an attempt to speak—or an impatient murmur. They turned, and saw the Curate standing near the window, by which he had entered. He had met the messenger sent to the Gravel-pits on the road, when he was on his way, as he said, to make inquiries for Lady Eloisa and Miss D'Arc. He bowed to the latter as he spoke.

But where was the phantom of Mary's

dreams—the Rinaldo of her song, the soother of her terror of the preceding day, her "pitcher companion" in short? There stood the cold, fault-finding Curate. There was the fixed displeasure of countenance, which at first had placed so wide a barrier between them; there the stern compressure of lips, which seemed but for that violence done them, to be bent on anathema. And there too was Joe Sims' failure as regarded a gentleman's coat; there the ill-tied cravat, which would have marred the contours of an Apollo, or the gentlemanly bearing of a D'Orsay.

There was a slight tinge of embarrassment in Captain Essenden's greeting to the Curate, kind and warm-hearted as were his expressions of pleasure at seeing him. He was energetic too in his acknowledgements of the promptness with which Mr. Leigh had withdrawn the poor boys from the danger to which little Ellie had exposed them; but still he seemed pleased with the excuse offered by

the plea of seeking Lady Eloisa, to quit the library for a few minutes.

Mary was now alone with one, on whom her thoughts had rested almost exclusively for the last eighteen hours: and though his severe aspect rather recalled the feelings of awe with which he had first impressed her; still, like the child whose playmate frights it with a mask, she trusted that there was yet the friendly face beneath.

A blush, that had risen up on first perceiving Mr. Leigh, had now faded away, leaving her unusually pale; there was also a little tremor and an appearance of nervousness; so that he had some cause for remarking that she seemed not wholly to have recovered the terror, which the little boys had occasioned her the day before.

With more of her natural manner than she had ever yet been able to maintain towards him, and with that winning sweetness which never failed to conciliate, she said:

"Oh! yes, I have quite got over the fright poor Ellie's mischief occasioned us all; and not only that, but I have got over the fear I had of you, Mr. Leigh. Indeed, you were so kind to me when I was suffering from that dreadful faintness yesterday, that I begin to fancy you do think it possible I may be a fellow creature." There was a timidity in her manner which seemed to repudiate the confidence her words expressed; and, in spite of the smile which accompanied them, there was a little bitterness, a slight resentment of his avoidance of herself, that at once struck on his perceptions. He looked earnestly at her, ere he replied; seemingly to reconnoitre the spirit with which she spoke. She knew not, that, intimately persuaded of the coquetry which lurked in her every action, he weighed her words as of doubtful honesty. He knew not that this same coquetry, which hung about her, had nothing in it of design; but was in fact part and parcel of herself, and one of

the results of the liking which her capacious heart felt for all those who showed her kindness. Neither of them knew that a strong cord of attraction drew them to each other; drawing him, in spite of a foregone conclusion of her worldliness and levity; drawing her, in spite of his coldness and austerity of manner, which was utterly new to her experience, and therefore doubly repelling.

And now her soft loving eyes met his scrutinizing glance, with the unshrinking look natural to her candid nature. The previous sternness of his countenance melted away at once, like a Canadian winter; and an eye as kind, as expressive of sweet humanities as her own, rested upon her. But it was quickly averted; and rising, as if to examine the music on the piano-forte, he said lightly, answering to her last sentence: "If I did not think you quite a fellow creature, there was at least humility in the thought. It was a point of ancient faith to believe in something

between men and angels, perhaps you have infected me with the heresy."

"Ah! you ward off grave accusation with compliments, Mr. Leigh. That is just what I dislike; it is so cowardly." And Mary's peevish look was half the reflection of her feelings half assumed. "If you want subject for flattery," she continued with that hurried utterance, which is adopted when people are not sufficiently at their ease to wait tranquilly for answers to their words, "tell me what you think of our performance of the duet which Captain Essenden was singing with me when you entered?"

"It was perfect," was the reply; and, taking the music from the stand, the Curate looked quickly over the words.

"Do you like music, or do you think it—' Mary stopped.

"Wicked?" Mr. Leigh supplied the word with a smile of scorn, adding: "Are you too of that class, Miss D'Arc, who see

recipes for righteousness of their clergyman, as they do those for health of their doctor. If I were to tell you what such a vague question implies, however, I might risk offending you; as I once did by my stupid matter-of-fact habits. Let it pass—I do like music—I do not think it—wicked," and he smiled kindly, as he spoke the last word mockingly. "Still, even that ethereal source of pleasure may be perverted, when the voice is made to utter words as passionate as these," and he read some of them with a low accent, half pleased and half derisive of their sentimentality.

"Oh! no one thinks of the words while singing," Mary said hastily; and then blushed at her own disingenuousness; remembering, that in fact, her heart had addressed them to himself, the hero of her dream-land. Though artificial, as yet she had never been untrue; and the consciousness of dissimulation confused her.

Mr. Leigh looked quickly and enquiringly into her eyes; they dropped beneath his glance. He turned from her with a cold disturbed expression on his countenance, as he threw the music on the piano-forte.

Lady Eloisa, who had been found by her husband, as might have been imagined, surrounded by her six children, enjoying the ineffable pleasure of rambling with them through the grounds unattended by a single nurse, now entered. It was *à propos*, and her kind salutation dispersed the cloud that had gathered on the brow of Mr. Leigh.

The conversation became general and animated, and Mary felt angry with herself that she could not join in it; but, on the contrary, with a restraint she could not account for, remained a silent listener. Captain Essenden looked at her anxiously for a moment, in an instant detecting some change; but her kind smile, as she answered some trifling remark he addressed to her, appeared to re-assure him;

and with the pleasure which the society of the Curate always afforded him, who alone among the homely wits and feather-bed minds of the country gentlemen around Deirham seemed to understand him, he rejoiced at the opportunity of showing his prowess in what Rochester termed that "jibing, jingling knack called wit." Mr. Leigh was no unequal combatant. And while Mary could not avoid noticing the exquisite elegance and fashion of Captain Essenden, as contrasted with the Curate, she felt that in the words of the latter, there was a lightness and yet force of expression which spoke of the *aplomb* of the mind that uttered them.

In eyes, accustomed by association with the gay world to see everything and every body looking the very best it can look, there is a spirit of scrutiny which sees and examines into all; a sensitiveness to everything uncomely or warring against the laws of beauty or good taste, amounting almost to pain. To one unaccustomed to meet clergymen in society, the

half-priest's, half-professor's costume of the Curate, might well disguise the real symmetry of his face and form. Seen in juxta-position with Captain Essenden, it hid it so effectually that Mary found herself unable to recal the vision of the noble and classical head and shoulders which had made so vivid an impression the day before; and it passed away like a summer shadow, leaving only the impression of an interest—a dread, a liking, and yet a resentment in her feelings for the stern, hard-mannered Mr. Leigh.

Lady Eloisa's wish, that he would spend the morning with them, was refused on the score of engagements at Deirham; whither he tried to persuade Captain Essenden to accompany him, with an earnestness to which his friend evidently found a difficulty in replying. The plea of the walk being long, was waived by begging him to take his pony. The promise that he was to drive the ladies, was cancelled by them. Business with his bailiff,

he was told, might be transacted *chemin faisant*. However, still Captain Essenden resisted; and Mr. Leigh at length left them, with something of the perturbed look Mary had found so difficult to interpret on her first seeing him that morning. She half fancied that there was something in it of anger towards Captain Essenden; and yet there had been so much of candour and cordiality in the manner of each to each, that it at once contradicted the idea.

Luncheon, some more singing, some romping with the pretty children, a beautiful drive through picturesque woods—where leaves of every tint fluttered in the mild autumnal breeze—completed this happy morning; and Mary prepared to dress for a dinner at Admiral Calthorpe's, almost forgetting the strange reveries—the *soave palpiti*—which had preluded the day.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Women will love her, that she is a woman
More worth than any man; men, that she is
The rarest of all women."

SHAKESPEAR

THERE is an astonishing family like in the dinners of country neighbours as as in their gardens: their parterres are filled with the same flowers; their di tables all covered with the same style of vi

ose you have met at every party for the welvemonth. Still, dinners are given; people groan over their invitations—groan their fulfilment; and yet mark those fail in giving the "return dinner." If tuous feasts and the meeting of neigh-

were ever designed as measures of nd gladness, what is that evil influence i now renders them a double-edged tax, ing those who give, and those who e? The answer would fill a volume;— medy involve a thorough re-organization ciety. We must then leave that anoma- ffair, "country gaiety," under the miasma lness which ever hangs over it.

ere was a power of finding amusement i others only encountered tediousness, i gave Miss. D'Arc always the appear- of life and gladness; and the cordiality which she was universally welcomed, nlarly by the Calthorpes, told how y they valued her presence, and the

evidence which she gave, that there was really pleasure to be picked up in this affair of visiting, if people knew how to set about it. From some such circumstances, she had by degrees, and in the lapse of a few months, really erected herself into a little sovereignty; an eminence chiefly attained by a spirit of enjoyment which infected those around her, and a sweetness of disposition which made her believe all the good that people wished to be believed respecting themselves, and treat them accordingly. This courtesy, or credulity—the French would call it *bonhommie*—made her peculiarly charming to those, who—benumbed by the petrifying influence of "county people's" consequence, "county people's" propriety, and the dread of incurring the ill-tempered remarks which "county people" can make on their neighbours—live in a perpetual dread of failing in consequence or propriety. If perchance society might have been originally constructed

as a measure to favour the interchange of ideas, and the exhibition of those kindly feelings—those acquirements and prettinesses—those little "properties" which throw a golden light over the stern realities of existence, and which rust by seclusion and desuetude—how entirely did the "county people" round Deirham mistake the thing!

Mrs. Calthorpe's dinners did not quite aspire to the dignity of the usual "power of dullness," to be encountered in the best houses in the neighbourhood. Indeed, as recent settlers in the county—the Admiral, the seventh son of a Devonshire apothecary—herself, the daughter of a steward and land-surveyor—they stood confessedly "new people;" and as such, had the liberty of making their dinners as agreeable, as, with a French cook and guests chosen more with reference to agreeable and friendly qualities than to "standing," as it is emphatically called, they could make them.

The Admiral, besides the delusion of fancy-

ing every woman would be in love with him if they dared, had that of believing himself a literary character; his grounds for the supposition being the insertion of two or three articles in Blackwood or Fraser. With this impression, he endeavoured to gather round him those of the same craft. Mr. Regulus Tarleton came under this category: not as the successful author, like the Admiral; but one whose very existence had been blighted by the review of a volume of poetry with a mystic Tennysonian title, which he had once given the world; and it was rather amusing to find the different light in which they held critical periodicals. To Tarleton, a Reviewer was a sort of vulture preying on a poet's vitals instead of a Promethean liver. The Edinburgh and Quarterly he considered as imperial Thugs, against whom a legion of authors should at once be formed. The Monthlies he took as a swarm of *aphides*, blighting the blossoms of literature; and, as to Blackwood—the grim traitor who had nipped

his "Lady of the Pirate's Isle" in the bud—he was a licentious mercenary, who, like a snail, never failed to

"Signaler ses pas destructeurs,
Par les traces les plus impures.
Outrager les plus tendres fleurs,
Par ses baisers ou ses morsures."

The critical contributors to Fraser shared no better in his estimation; and he never failed to accompany every mention of them with the sweeping comment, that the whole band came under the lash of him, who, describing such, had said that they

"At first for wits, then poets pass'd,
Turn'd critics next, and prov'd plain fools at last."

The discussions between this cast-away of literature and the belaurelled Admiral were long and stormy; sometimes amusing, sometimes bitter, as the case might be. On the day in question, the appearance of one of the Admiral's

"yarns" in Blackwood had put additional spirit into their controversy. So much so, that, for—— getting the little love-making and chess-playing in which he was accustomed to engage an monopolize Mary, he resigned himself entire to the pleasure of baiting poor Mr. Tarleton; enjoying his malicious retorts as people are wont to do, who fancy their own superiority the exciting cause.

Sir Henry Acton hailed the secession of the Admiral; and, instigated by the Dowager, he resolved to profit by the occasion, to invite Miss D'Arc to a game of chess; and so "get forward," as gardeners would say, some preliminary courting, before the grand proposal should be made.

Lady Acton had fully sanctioned, and, indeed, had urged this latter consummation. She was weary of being "magistrate and county member;" and saw no one to whom she could better delegate the task of pulling the wires of that heavy piece of mechanism, her son, than Miss

D'Arc. Her want of fortune was her only drawback. But Lady Acton had heard that "Endeavours and an active brain are better than patrimonies left by parents." She thought it might be so; and, when she looked round among the young ladies of fortune in the neighbourhood whose souls seemed sunk in verbena beds and Sunday schools, she could not but feel that Mary had preponderating advantages.

Sir Henry had put his tea cup on the salver waiting at his elbow, and turned to the venture; when, to his discomfiture, he beheld Mary in a corner, in close conversation with Captain Essenden. So intrenched in was she with ottomans and chairs, that it required more coolness than he could command at the moment, to thread the mazes and seek her side; so, after sundry timid attempts to meander through them, he desisted.

Lady Acton saw his difficulties, and proposed, as she had done a thousand times before, to smooth them. For this purpose she made a

feint to pass that corner of the drawing-room, and in her progress displaced some of the fortifications. Still this did not answer. Before Sir Henry was prepared to take advantage of the breach, Captain Essenden, with movements apparently as aimless as those of the motherly coadjutor, had drawn in fresh ottomans to the munition; still continuing a whispering conversation with Miss D'Arc, whose smiles and laughing eyes showed her childish enjoyment of the manœuvres.

Other eyes than Sir Henry's and his mother's had rested on this part of Mrs. Calthorpe's drawing-room. One had looked long and anxiously; for there was something in it, she knew not why, jarring to her feelings; and she could have asked with the wretched Leontes—

> "Is whispering nothing?
> Is leaning cheek to cheek?"

It was Lady Eloisa, who, though apparently listening to Mrs. Gordon's praises of their

Curate, and the vast debt of gratitude owed by the parish of Deirham to Captain Essenden for having been the means of introducing it to the notice of Mr. Leigh, was in reality watching, with the first inquietude it had ever given her, her husband's attentions to another woman.

There ought to be a word invented to describe the feeling thus called forth; and which is as unlike jealousy, as the first rigors are to the raging fever which suceeds them, though a concomitant. It is alarm, indignation, mortification, and doubt, all mixed up in the heart, which swells and beats quickly under the novel and complex sensations.

Lady Eloisa was just quailing at the shadow ast before her, when Mrs. Gordon, always ood-tempered, and always *mal à propos*, seemed ' give it substance and life, by remarking, as in answer to the thoughts of Lady Eloisa, Captain Essenden is always so agreeable, the ung ladies forget that he is not a disengaged n."

At this moment, by a little expressive gesture, Mary seemed to solicit Lady Eloisa to join them. She only hesitated for one instant, and the next was rewarded for her clement compliance. She then found, or thought she found, the nothingness of the shadows which had struck such terror. Mary told her that she was in great dread of the efforts which Sir Henry was making to join her, and her suspicions of his intentions; and that Captain Essenden at first had aided her efforts in evading Sir Henry, but that he now declared his determination of clearing the course for him.

"But you will stay by me, will you not, dear Lady Eloisa?" she said affectionately; like all merry-hearted people, rather blind to the dark clouds which may hang over others. "And will you make Captain Essenden remain where he is, and not break down this nice barricade, as he has been threatening?"

The cloud passed from the smooth front of Lady Eloisa. With a woman's tact, she saw

in Miss D'Arc's whole bearing, unequivocal marks of indifference; and as far as regarded her consideration of Captain Essenden, beyond her mere estimation of him as an agreeable acquaintance, nothing could be more satisfactory. The assurance spoke comfort to her heart. In the happy revulsion, she thought not of scrutinizing her husband's feelings. It was evident that the subject of the *tête-à-tête*, with all its mysterious whisperings, had been merely the quizzing Mary on the loutish Baronet's evident passion. It was a favourite theme with Essenden. Why, she could not tell. But Mary took all his sarcasms quietly; and seemed as much amused by the odd little amatory advances of the Baronet as Essenden himself.

At dinner that day, Sir Henry had made more pointed advances than he had ever been allowed to do before; and which had been in a measure seconded by the attentions Lady Acton had shewn to Mary, on the ladies retiring to the drawing-room. This had

doubtless put Mary on her guard; and the alliance of Captain Essenden had been called for in consequence. But there was nothing sinister, nothing betokening a further feeling for her husband than was shewn to herself; and Lady Eloisa felt that there was not one just cause for complaint. All was open, attractive good-nature; and as for saying and doing pretty coquettish things, they were the little tricks of the *rôle* she enacted; and would have been brought into play with an old lady of the company, as much as with the most attractive man.

Men and women, in the facts and affairs of love as connected with jealousy, are too prone to look on the matter as Lady Eloisa had done and find their safety in the evident guilelessness of the dreaded foe.

Doubtless, any and the least approach to a state of suspicion and jealousy is the most painful that can attack an upright heart; it being one, where individual or personal recti-

titude is no security. A witty author has said, "Of all the passions, jealousy is that which exacts the hardest service, and pays the bitterest wages. Its service is, to watch the *success* of our enemy—its wages, to be *sure* of it." It is most natural, therefore, that the high minded should turn from such a position; which, moreover, by involving craft and *espionage*, sinks them in their own esteem, at a time when self-satisfaction is most requisite as a support. But where there has been the least cause for inquietude, it shews that there is a distempered state of things, which cannot—indeed which should not—be so lightly passed over. It demands the probing and scrutiny of a watchful, even though a loving, heart; and, according to the discoveries made, so should be the measures taken.

Wives and husbands watch the first symptoms of sickness in those with whom heaven has united them. They guard against its increase; they take active steps for its abate-

ment. The analogy must be surely felt. There is a sickness—a fever of the passions which calls for equal care—equal watchfulness. None should shrink from this duty, however grating to the heart to plunge into the secret feelings of one, whose dereliction would be more painful than their death. It may be that the most disastrous circumstances may be revealed; but who can say that they have done their utmost to turn the partners of their bosom from the gulf yawning for their destruction, until they have watched—have detected—have used earnest supplication—not reproach—for their return to the things of virtue and reason. Much of this world's misery—of this world's guilt—might have been spared, had husbands or wives thus kept guard over those they had avowed before God to cherish, to love. Without this watch, is the marriage vow fulfilled?

Lady Eloisa could not, would not, see that the pleasure which Captain Essenden appeared

to gather from the liveliness and attractions of Miss D'Arc was greater than she herself experienced; and she forbore to seek more light upon the subject. Too indulgent, too gentle-minded to think evil of any one, she refrained from harsh judgment of the light-hearted young woman, who so unreservedly monopolized the attentions of a married man—so unguardedly laid herself open to animadversion in a confined society, whose peculiar views certainly required more circumspection than did the more expansive notions of those with whom her life had hitherto been passed.

All kindness and complacency, Lady Eloisa entered into the little drama; in which Sir Henry played the part of an Ogre, Mary the fair Princess, herself and her husband guardian genii. At length she said merrily to Mary: "After all, Miss D'Arc, I think that Hubert and I are much to blame, thus to stand in the way of this good young man. Why should

not he be allowed to do his possible to please you? He is considered one of the best matches in the country."

Mary only replied by a rapid mimicry of the peculiar way in which Sir Henry nestled his chin in his cravat; putting her hand against her slender waist, precisely as the Baronet for ever kept his left hand in his waistcoat pocket.

A hearty laugh put a stop to Lady Eloise's matronly expostulation in favour of Sir Henry. Captain Essenden took up the theme, and with mock gravity enumerated the advantage of such an alliance; rather perversely keeping the actual merits of the case in the background.

A truce was put to this *badinage* by Admiral Calthorpe joining them. He always asserted and maintained a sort of prescriptive right to the monopoly of Miss D'Arc. She lent herself to the kind dominion with cordiality and all the *gentillesse* of her nature. Captain

Essenden thought that the Admiral was scarcely old enough, to have his vanity thus pampered by a young pretty woman. But Mary would never hear a detracting word against the gallant old sailor; and prepared to sing his favourite songs, he being too excited by his discussion with the poet for his regular game of chess.

Having discomfited Mr. Tarleton, the Admiral had left him to be consoled by Mrs. Gordon, who thought to pour oil upon his wounds by joining in his abuse of Blackwood and Fraser; asking with well feigned horror what could be expected of magazines, who carried a lie on their title page by purporting to be the publications of men who were known to be sleeping where all men, reviewers and the reviewed, must sleep. The speech was well meant and well got up; but it failed in soothing Mr. Tarleton. With a Byronic grin he told her all things were a lie, from a queen's letter down to the monstrous myth of John

Doe's and Richard Roe's pedestrian excursions through the country. He could have been infinitely more bitter, and perhaps have affronted the good old lady; but he reflected that her ward on her majority came into fifty thousand pounds.

On the day succeeding the dinner at the Admiral's Mary returned to the Arches. She took leave of Lady Eloisa and Captain Essenden with much regret; the more so that their annual visit of three months to Lady Eloisa's father was about to take place, and thus some time must elapse before they again met.

This visit to Lord Ilsea had been one of the devices by which Lady Eloisa, with love's own prescience, had sought to lighten the monotony of married life for the pampered Hubert; and it had usually answered her desires. It took them into a gay hunting neighbourhood when it was most alive; and she had always found the comparative retire-

ment of High Down better enjoyed after the excitement of the change.

The prospect of their visit at this time did not appear to offer so much pleasure to Captain Essenden as was usually the case. He explained this to Lady Eloisa, by observing that perhaps it would be better that he should remain to superintend the formation of some new plantations then in hand. His wife could not hear of his being left alone to cope with the dullness of the coming winter, without offering to remain with him. He seemed half disposed to take her at her word; and intimated that he thought the children got dreadfully spoilt at their grandfather's. The sad look of Lady Eloisa seemed to call up a feeling that was fast fading; and the visit to Ilsea Castle was decided upon.

Mary found, on her return from High Down, that the Curate had called on Lady Leverton on his return to the village after his visit to the Essendens the morning that he had re-

called Mary back to her old awe of him. He had left a most favourable impression.

"But did you not think him very formal —very repulsive?" Mary asked. On the contrary, the Viscountess had found him most pleasing; while she drew to her daughter's remembrance, the picture of a San Lorenzo in a gallery at Palermo, to which he bore much resemblance. Mary was surprised to learn, that, through all his disguise of ill-fashioned and precise-looking habiliments, Lady Leverton could discern that which had only struck her, when she had seen him with bared throat and the fine contour of his head and shoulders all discovered: and she wondered still more that the forbidding demeanour, which paralysed her own efforts to be agreeable, should only be felt by herself. It confirmed her in the idea of dislike on the part of Mr. Leigh towards her: an idea which, however, called forth no angry feeling; but on the contrary perhaps a little whetted the spirit of

coquetry within her to attempt to overcome it.

The wish of being better liked by the Curate, mingled as it was with doubt and diffidence, led her often to the house of Mrs. Gordon, where she knew he was a frequent visitor. But she never encountered him there; and a month passed without their meeting.

On one of her visits to the Manor House, instead of being ushered into the snug little library in which Mrs. Gordon and her ward usually passed the morning, the servant showed her into the drawing-room, more particularly appropriated to the reception of formal visitors. After a few minutes, Miss Stratton joined her there. There was an expression at once of pleasure and emotion on her countenance, which Mary could not help connecting with the presence of Mr. Leigh; and she was confirmed in the idea, by seeing him shortly pass down the drive followed by two poor women.

"I am afraid that I have disturbed you," Mary said rather coldly; almost hurt that she should be excluded from the *sanctum*, apparently on the Curate's account. "Why, as you had a visitor, did you not let me wait?"

"Oh! Mr. Leigh's business was chiefly with Mrs. Gordon," Miss Stratton replied. "He was engaging her assistance for the poor women you saw with him, and she has promised that we will do our best for them. There never were greater objects of charity."

"May I not also assist you with some trifle?" Mary asked, taking out her purse.

"Thank you, you are very good; but it is trouble and not money that must be spent on these wretched creatures," Miss Stratton replied.

Mary longed to volunteer assistance in that respect also; but was withheld by the consciousness that it was not quite a pure feeling of charity which impelled her, but one that arose in a measure from her wish of doing

that which might tend towards conciliating Mr. Leigh. She was silent, therefore, with something like a slight sensation of embarrassment, which sent a blush to her cheek.

Miss Stratton, who—with a cold, little pinky-white face—light hair, very tightly curled—light blue eyes and scanty white eyelashes—a little plump figure, only remarkable for its absence of shape—was the prototype of a little wax-doll, and showed very little more animation—had a sensibility and quickness of perception which seemed to lay the feelings of hearts open before her, saw the wish, though she could hardly guess the obstruction to its utterance; and, taking Mary's hand, said with the hesitation to which her timidity always gave rise, but with the affection which Mary's attractive character had awakened in her heart: "Perhaps Miss D'Arc, you will let us apply to you, in the event of Mr. Leigh thinking of sending these poor women back to their own country. Do you know any one who

has connexions in Malta? They come from thence; one being the wife of an English soldier, who has deserted her and gone out with his regiment to India."

Mary pressed the little fat hand, saying, with truth, how pleased she should be to be of service, and mentioned the Count San Steffano as one likely to further their wishes. It seemed the very thing to be desired; and on Mrs Gordon joining them, and being consulted on the point, she despatched a note forthwith to the Curate to mention the readiness of Mary to apply to the Count to facilitate the return of the soldier's wife and her mother to Malta.

Mary was not surprised the next morning on hearing Mr. Leigh announced; but she was surprised at the open, unaffected, cordiality of his manner, which, after the lapse of a few minutes, was evident, and so different to the clouds and frowns of their last meeting. The business of the Maltese women was soon settled; and Mary received full instructions as to her

application to Count San Steffano. But the Curate's visit did not end with the business which had brought him to the Arches; and he remained above an hour, pleasing as much by the earnest benevolence which peeped forth in all his words, as by the refinement and intellectual style of his discourse.

This was all very charming; but on a review of the visit, Mary found that, although she had received so forcible an impression of Mr. Leigh's powers of being delightful, she could hardly have given rise to any of the same nature. The cause of this was, that in his manner there was a simplicity, a searching for truth, that tacitly forbade all those little prettinesses, which, though become to her as second nature, still could not be mustered to the replies, which questions and remarks such as his called for. With this power, that drew from her words as simple and as truth-telling as his own, there was an indescribable influence which created a trepidation—a difference at once novel, and, in

a measure, painful to her. In proof of this, as she turned to the glass as he left the cottage, she saw herself with a flushed cheek and the pulses of her throat throbbing quickly.

Was this simply from mortification at the idea that she had shone to so little advantage, where she had wished to please? She could hardly tell. But something impelled her to conceal the effects from the observation of the Viscountess; and she left the room under the plea of preparing for a walk.

Alone, pacing to and fro the gravel path which led to the ruins, she had leisure to look more minutely into the particulars of the Curate's visit. There was decided satisfaction in being able to assist his views regarding the poor Maltese; and so far her feelings were unmixed: but, with a profound sense of pleasure in his conversation—in the evidence of acute sensibility, which his words and the deep intonation of his musical voice at times showed forth—in the kindness so oddly mixed with the excessive

deference of his manners—there was a painful impression of disquietude and perturbation, accompanied also by the consciousness of having been wanting in a certain presence of mind, and that ease given by the long habitude of society, and which had rarely failed her.

She pondered long on the seeming contradiction. Past experience offered no solution to the enigmatical state of her feelings. She was cognizant of two distinct impressions regarding Mr. Leigh. The one leading to an expansion of affection and sentiment, to which she feared to resign herself, and dared scarcely inquire into; the other, and the most usual, giving a sense of rebuff, of purposed coolness and *méfiance*, at times almost calling up indignation; and then, the deep regret that it should be so; and accounted for by comparing it with certain effects sometimes produced on her by the society of Mrs. Gordon and her ward.

With them she had always been sensible of an indefined distance between them, not suffi-

cient to check their numberless proofs of good-will, but decidedly existing. She guessed that this owed its origin to a certain elevation of religious feeling, which made itself visible in a thousand ways; and which they must know she was not only far from sharing, but even comprehending.

With the courtesy of good-breeding which would ever avoid offending, rather than from a hypocritical assumption of piety foreign to her feelings, she had often found it necessary to suppress much that she would say, and to listen with a feigned interest to much that was strange to her. And yet with all this care, she had been sensible, of perpetually broaching opinions which seemed like the setting of a saw to the ears of her companions. This had forbidden all *abandon* on her part, placing her also in the position of a dissembler; so that, with all the kindly feelings to which their excessive goodness and singleness of heart gave rise, and in spite of the growing affection, timidly, yet

decidedly, manifested by Miss Stratton, Mary had found herself scarcely advancing in the intimacy which Mrs. Gordon seemed so much to court.

The retrospect which placed all this before Mary, was now to be succeeded by actual application and comparison with the impressions, created and left by each succeeding interview with Mr. Leigh. With much analogy, she found this difference. Instead of disguising or withholding her opinions, it seemed that with him her every feeling as it rose was made manifest; while his disapproval or commendation was as plainly to be discerned. Still she summedup her examination; and was pacified with the belief that awanting in those extreme notions of religion which he entertained imparted embarrassment to her feelings and manner; the effect of which was still more enhanced by the abrupt and searching nature of his words and looks.

It had never entered into the ideas of

Mary, that her present notions of religion could or might be extended. Religion to her was like the Court of Chancery, or any other obscure reality; and only to be understood by those to whom circumstances made it a peculiar subject for study. She would as little have thought of learning more of it, than what the Sunday service and the morning and evening bed-side prayer afforded, as she would have of seeking instruction in the crudities of a law court. She knew that there were some women who went farther than herself in these abstractions; but, as far as her experience shewed her, it was chiefly those, who, disappointed by the promises of the gay world, turned for indemnification to those held out by an excess of devotion; and which at least enabled them to run a tilt at the fragile toys, which had once engaged their hearts.

She felt that Mrs. Gordon and Miss Stratton were not among these; and that it was with

the freshness of a young heart that Miss Stratton devoted herself to opinions and actions, which, however strange and incomprehensible to herself, she could still imagine might prevail, where a life of seclusion had raised no other source of interest.

Mary had never experienced those indefined and restless emotions of the soul, which would seek to repose upon the bosom of the Great and the Infinite. The world, and the things of the world, to her had been all sufficient—all absorbing. She had never even felt the vacuum which satiety or a cessation of merry doings may occasion—a vacuum so often experienced by the "used up"—it may be for good, it may be for evil; and a happy disposition and contentment of heart, a mind perhaps too easily amused, had kept her from those secret and mystical yearnings, which, by a strange contradiction, elevate and yet depress the spirit.

CHAPTER IX.

"What! do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again
And feast upon her eyes? What is't I dream on?
Oh! cunning enemy, to catch a saint.
Ever, 'till now,
When men were fond, I smil'd and wonder'd how."

SHAKESPEARE.

THE next visit of the Curate to the Archer was for the purpose of informing Mary of the good result of her negotiations with Cour-

As Mary had come to the conclusion, that a deficiency in the spiritual feelings which actuated himself gave the tone of inferiority and constraint in her manners towards Mr. Leigh, she had resolved on the adoption of a wariness at their next meeting; by which, avoiding all topics likely to involve allusions to religious matters, or indeed to anything of a serious nature, she could confine the conversation to the mere babble of the day. In such common-place matters, she felt that she could meet him on equal ground.

She was absent from the drawing-room when he was shown in; and, as a further check to the paralysing dominion which he seemed to exercise over her, took the opportunity of arming herself with a double portion of fortitude, and some of those feminine graces—coquetry some would style them—on which she placed much importance; and which she believed, by occupying the attention of the enemy, would make him forget to wield his

own weapons. Taking the ivory brush from her *toilette*, she smoothed the silky gloss of her dark braids to an increased lustre. She passed two jewelled bangles over her well-formed hands, whose excessive delicacy seemed heightened by the glow of the rubies; and conscious of her beauty she entered the drawing-room with the firm, yet light step of one, whose glorious loveliness was well seconded by the matchless elegance and womanly dignity of her whole bearing.

Its effect was perceptible on Mr. Leigh. He omitted to take the hand she timidly, and, as it were, half extended to him. He placed a chair for her, with the hurried, deferential ceremony he would have observed towards a stranger; and when he turned to renew the conversation with Lady Leverton which her entrance had interrupted, he had evidently lost the thread, and sought with some little confusion to resume the subject.

This all conduced to the re-assurance of

Mary; and calling a very arsenal of attractions to her aid, she employed all the most potent arms of loveliness, with the ease and the grace of those whose life has been one of exhibition and display.

It were as vain to describe the perfection of look and manner which marked her every look and action, as it would be to draw lines o the mingling tints of the rainbow. Inimit-ble—it was a charm that must be acquired, ot copied; illusive—it enchanted, even, when ce the lightning's flash, its direction could arcely be followed. Mary felt her power; t the immunity, which this *chevaux de frise* at by coquetry, gave her from the dispiriting fluence that Mer usually exercised er her. But she found also, and with some rprise, that, after the first singular perturba-n of manner which he had betrayed at her st entrance, all her light words, all her ettiness, all the variations to which her

flexible humour led, were replied to, were met, were even anticipated by him, with the *savoir faire* and the vivacity of a complete man of the world.

They talked of Malta, and got from thence to Naples; where she found that the Curate must have been about the same time as herself, and was quite as learned in all the *cianciamento dei saloni* as the most perfect lounger in the pit of San Carlos. They then discussed Florence, its galleries, and its coteries, with the same superficial and conventional gossip; Mary all the time twisting gay coloured threads over her pink tipped fingers with a jewelled crochet needle, and only now and then raising her eyes to those of the Curate, from whence they were as quickly averted. She felt that, once meeting his and the deep hidden things which they spoke of, the distance established between them by this "plausible talk" would vanish; and she, losing the

vantage ground it had given her, sink again embarrassed, if not austerity-stricken, to the semblance of the truth-telling school-girl.

As if awakened by a sudden concurrence of ideas to a distaste to this sort of trifling, Mr. Leigh rose abruptly, preparing to depart; and after bidding adieu to Lady Leverton, he stood as it were waiting for Mary's parting salutation. She gave him her hand, raising her eyes as she did so, She met his looks; but how changed was their whole expression. His eyes now rested on her with a sad—a sort of complaining tenderness, that seemed at once to deprecate the careless coquetry of her bearing, and the motive which had led her to encase herself within its chilling, because heartless influence.

It was a strange power that made all this in a moment felt by her. No word was uttered; but a thrill, a sinking of the heart in an instant sent the blood to her cheeks and throat. This sudden emotion seemed to

impart itself to him. He too coloured, and held the hand she had given him with a clinging grasp. For an instant they thus stood mute, but with a magnetic communion, which seemed to limit the whole world to their two selves, and the few square feet they occupied. The instant had its term; he let fall her hand, and bowing left the room.

"How very unlike yourself, Mary, you always seem to me in the company of Mr. Leigh," was the passing remark of the Viscountess. "I did not give you Protestants credit for making a distinction in your manners between your priests and others."

Mary felt rather satisfied by this observation. It was, then, the office, not the man which had worked these effects in her. Doubtless her mother saw justly. Her constraint was the involuntary respect which a minister of the Church called for; and was yielded unknowingly by herself. Her embarrassment—it was more difficult to account for: but it probably arose

from her feelings, when absent from him, jumping to greater intimacy than his vocation allowed him to tolerate or encourage. It was possible, then, that the absence of a decided and pointed deference to himself had been the cause of all that was stern and abrupt in his demeanour towards her; while those passing gleams of kindness were prompted perhaps at once by indulgence for her omission, and cordial friendliness of disposition. She could recollect now that Mrs. Gordon and Miss Stratton seemed always to invest him with ecclesiastical dignity; while even the unceremonious Lady Eloisa was more formal in her manners to him than to others, though much of affection seemed mingled with them. Captain Essenden too, had shown decidedly restraint in his presence. She, then, had been wrong in treating him with secular familiarity.

All this passed quickly through the mind of Mary, with that amount of satisfaction which suddenly adopted explanations are found

to offer. She had a gentle spirit, a disposition which ever felt glad to make the *amende* where it was due. She now felt more desirous than she had ever done before, to adopt a manner that should in nothing offend the prejudices of the Curate. She believed that it was this wish to show him how perfectly orthodox she could be in her demeanour, that made her look so anxiously for their next meeting; however, in spite of sundry little efforts on her part, some weeks passed without her once encountering him.

It was now winter; but still the roads were unbroken: and the constant calls of Admiral Calthorpe, with frequent rides with Miss Stratton, prevented her feeling the *ennui*, which a leaden sky and the usual routine of December in the country might have inflicted.

With much kindness, Miss Stratton had directed her groom to exercise the horse he usually rode, for carrying a lady. The experiment fully answered,; and Mary found riding a

new and delightful amusement, frequently accompanying the kind little heiress in her excursions; the groom being mounted on one of Mrs. Gordon's coach-horses.

By this means, a greater intimacy was established between them; and, in spite of the shyness and diffidence of Miss Stratton, Mary became really attached to her, finding much that was amiable and interesting in her character. Still it was a character that, like the Egyptian statue, required some mysterious influence, some peculiar circumstance, to call forth its secret tones. On almost all occasions, there was that acquiescent spirit, that dwelling with tediousness on trivialities by which those of contracted or timid minds seek to make up their deficiences. But there were moments when, lured as it were from the coverts of mediocrity, the Memnon sounded—when looks and words spoke of a power within, that placed her with a higher order of beings. These occasions too, it might be remarked, were those,

when the lofty and eternal destiny of man by chance got on the silken *tapis* of young-lady-conversations; or, when the reclaiming the wicked, or sustaining the poor, were touched upon.

And once, when Miss D'Arc, with the conventional harshness of those who shrink behind the ingratitude and perverseness of the lower orders, as their excuse for knowing so little of them, suggested it would be as futile to attempt making cottagers, with all their nasty ways, comfortable, as to try the same experiment on rats and weasels, she entered on the subject with a warmth and an extent of information which showed how capable the young and inanimate girl was of generous feeling and intelligence. Once, indeed, some secret, silent thought seemed to light up the usual drowsy cast of the heiress's ideas, with a force equal to perfect transformation.

Their ride had brought them to the high ground immediately above the Heathfield gravel-pits; and, as they reined in their horses to

admire the lovely view which even on that winter day shewed gloriously, Mary could but marvel at the colony of small heath-roofed huts which clustered around them; some actually owning for their back walls the gravel-pit in which they were built, others standing aloof on little furze-crowned hills, picturesque from their very discomfort.

"And which is the palace which shelters the mighty Bishop of this diocese?" Mary said, rather scornfully; for, unconsciously to herself, she resented the continued absence of Mr. Leigh from the Arches.

Miss Stratton pointed with her whip to a two-storied house, about three hundred yards beyond, and whose large white bay window, even at that distance, bespoke it "the shop" of the district; while the show of whitewash, and roses and other creepers, with various peat-covered outhouses, proved it was, incontestibly, the domicile of those of a superior grade to the inhabitants of the huts around.

"And until Mr. Leigh made the move, all these people lived without benefit of clergy?" Mary asked. "And that hideous shed is the school-house and chapel?"

Both her questions were answered in the affirmative.

"Well, the Heathfielders have at least shown good taste in their location, however indifferent as regards architectural development where a church and school-house are concerned. What a lovely spot!" Mary continued, looking round on the wide heath sloping down gently to the vale beneath, smiling even beneath the questionable smile of a December's sun; the broken red ground contrasting so beautifully with the purple heath, and the thick clumps of fir-trees which crowned the summit, interspersed with larch, which age and exposure had twisted into forms strangely belying the spiral character of the tree. "What a lovely spot! Can you fancy, Miss Stratton, that in the lapse of years it may ever be made a habitable one? Can

you fancy a lovely little Norman church on that smooth green, which seems levelled for something better than a skittle or cricket-ground? Can you fancy a stone-built Parsonage nestling beneath that broken crest of the hill, its strawberry-beds running up to the summit? Can you fancy the Heathfielders leaving their huts to their pigs, and building fitter habitations for God's creatures? Can you fancy all this?"

Miss Stratton only answered with word and lip, "Can I?" But what a glow was over all her countenance—what a dilation—an inspiration made her eyes gleam with a seraph's fixed gaze, as she listened to Mary's fanciful questioning. "Can I?" she again uttered. Her face was upturned, and soft, whispered words seemed to pass her unclosed lips. Was it a prayer? Mary could not say, for the next minute she had turned her horse on to the turf in a fleet canter; and when Mary overtook her, she was again the quiet, little unpronounced Augusta Stratton.

For many weeks Mary had led so monotonous a life, that she hailed with pleasure a little note from Mrs. Calthorpe, which begged her, as a matter of principle, to come and help her enliven two hum-drum dinner parties. She proposed to call for her in the pony-chair the next day, the cart having orders to call for her wardrobe.

On the road, Mary learnt that the first party was to consist of the Rector and his family, the Curate, Mrs. Gordon and Miss Stratton, Mr. Regulus Tarleton, and two or three bachelor clergymen from a distance; whom, Mrs. Calthorpe described, with regard to their contour and costume, as only not like waiters, because so closely resembling linen-drapers.

It certainly was not a brilliant bill of fare; and yet Mary felt pleased and excited by the anticipation; and, when dressed for dinner, looked with as much satisfaction at the perfect loveliness and well chosen costume which her mirror reflected, as she could have done in by-

gone days when Princes and Potentates were to be fascinated.

Mrs. Calthorpe had made up her mind that the dinner-party must be a stupid one, because there was no one coming for whom she had the least interest; but it by no means exceeded the average and licensed dullness of country dinners.

Mr. Harcourt found it more agreeable than usual, because, when helping the turbot to a party of women and inexperienced bachelors, he had the power of reserving the best part for himself, without exciting the choler of any fellow epicure. Mrs. Harcourt had also her interest in the thing; for, being just on the brink of a few Christmns dinners, she had the opportunity of refreshing her mind by observation of the *entrées*. The young ladies were pleased, because they really had men to hand them into dinner. At Deirham, with its preponderance of female population, they were so tired of the remark: "Young ladies, you

must be cavaliers to each other." Mr. Tarleton had a vivid interest in the affair; and Mary soon found out that his hopes were fixed on attaining to the heiress's good graces. Her observations extended no farther; but she thought that all, like herself, must feel enlivened by the animation and good humour of those present.

She sat between Mr. Harcourt and Mr. Tarleton, for whom she had but little liking; but she felt that Mr. Leigh, who sat opposite, gave almost unremitting attention to her words. Next to speaking to him, was the pleasure of speaking for him; and, to judge by the mild yet earnest looks which she at times encountered, she seemed better to please him than heretofore.

Under the impression of the favour she was in, Mary expected, on the gentlemen rejoining the ladies in the drawing-room, that the Curate would assuredly seek her side. But her expectations were not at once fulfilled. He

stood very passively at the corner of the chimney-piece, on which his commanding height gave him the power of leaning; and seemed more occupied by the examination of a rose he had brought with him from the *épergne* in the dining-room, than with aught surrounding him.

Mary was in silent and intent observation of him, when their eyes met. In former days she had remarked, that, occasionally high-bred Englishmen, and always foreigners, seemed to consider encountering the eyes of a lady of their acquaintance, a reason for joining her, where practicable. And yet, at the moment Mr. Leigh approached her, she felt startled, and at a loss what to say; though his silence evidently implied, that he waited for her to address him.

It might have been the subject uppermost in her thoughts, or possibly only referred to at the moment to interrupt an awkward silence;

be that as it may, Mary said very quietly: "I was just thinking, Mr. Leigh, that if you look no more to the sayings and doings of the rest of your flock than you do to mine, Mr. Harcourt can scarcely find you a very active coadjutor."

Mr. Leigh looked sharply at her for a moment, as if to gather the spirit in which these words were said; but her eyes were rather averted; therefore he saw not the little laughing gleam in them, which might have suggested another answer. As it was, he simply replied: "You would not say so, if you knew the difficulty which attends the Ministry, where the attention of the better orders cannot be reached from the pulpit. You have touched upon what I fear must be ever an unsatisfactory portion of our duties. We may speak comfort or reproof in the cottages of the poor—or in the homes of the middle classes; but we have not yet learnt

how to approach those, who by position or education consider themselves exempt from our intrusion."

Mary saw that he had taken her words up seriously; which she had not intended. To lower the tone, therefore, she said playfully: "Well; supposing, like all other Ambassadors, you have *les petites entrées*, how would you begin telling me of my sins?"

The Curate caught the humour with which this was spoken; and met the soft kind eyes which were lifted up to his, with looks as kind, saying: "Oh! I should begin from the beginning, and tell you of your fallen nature."

Mary who was not "well up" in her Theology, and felt getting on strange ground, said timidly: "Fallen! it is an ugly word."

"It is truly so," was the Curate's answer. "It speaks to us like the broken Torso; which, with all the divine beauties of man

effaced, we see moss-grown — trodden under foot."

"But is our nature really so fallen?" Mary asked.

"It is a disagreeable truth," the Curate said gravely, "but it is a truth; and our uneasy sense of it is shown in all our doings, and by all the earnestness with which each one shrinks from their own identity. The child's first play is to make him other than himself, and he apes the cat or the dog. The boy alike courts delusion, and is the soldier or the robber, in short anything but himself. In man, the desire to escape from self is more strongly marked, and shown in his every pursuit, whether it be labour, pleasure, or study. What are they all but self-smotherings? And most satisfactory, when, by their means, all sense of self, that is of the fallen, sin-stained, death-cursed creature is banished. Will you pardon me when I surmise," he added kindly, but

forcibly, "that your whole life has been spent in a successful endeavour to conceal your true self from yourself. I mean your human nature from your social nature?"

"It may be," Mary said, slightly colouring; for the earnestness of the Curate made her nervous; "yet not for the purpose you would ascribe to me."

"Perhaps not," he said; "which goes still further to prove, that, in its duration, a course of pleasure is the most powerful hindrance to that painful knowledge of our nature, which all shrink from."

"But, surely, there are those who brave the dark secret, and yet live without labour, study, or pleasure?" Mary asked.

"I know but of two classes," Mr. Leigh replied. "The one, the opium eater; or, which is the same, the habitual drunkard; and who thus live in the fairy-land of intoxication: the other, he who has dared to look his fallen nature in the face—*envisager* the French would say,

and it is a better expression — who has paused to examine the plague spot; who sees its corruption, its death-taint; and turns to the one cure, which rose to this world, at the very moment of man's confirmed, utter, abject hopelessness."

Mary shuddered slightly. There was nothing forced, nothing of stage effect in the words of Mr. Leigh; but his low tones, and the purport of his expressions, for a moment oppressed her with dread.

People unused to it, are with religion and even the mention of it, as with electricity. They know it is something of giant force, though ignorant of its mode of action; and they fear its effects upon themselves. Mary now regretted having touched upon the subject. She had done so from the incipient coquetry which influenced so much of her conduct; and by which she now sought to establish an intimacy between herself and one, who, while at once moving her to liking and resent-

ment by his alternations of kindness and severity, interested her in a thousand particulars. But to draw upon herself a religious disquisition was farthest from her thoughts; and would only be resorted to as a preliminary to making herself a Sister of Mercy, or the mistress of a national school. As well, therefore, to change the conversation, as because her attention was awakened, she said laughingly, looking to the other side of the drawing-room, in the pause succeeding Mr. Leigh's last words; "Mr. Tarleton appears to have discovered a good method of losing sight of self, by investing it in another. He really is making desperate love to poor little Miss Stratton. Oh! I do hope that it will be a match," she added; not perceiving that this abrupt transition from one subject, as well as that adopted, were alike distasteful. "It would do something towards enlivening poor Deirham."

Her words struck discordantly on the Curate's ears. There was a common-place tone in them,

a forced vivacity, adopted possibly to hide the sort of tribulation his words had imparted, which he thought unworthy of her; and he replied coldly: "I cannot see one good reason for the hope you express so earnestly, Miss D'Arc, and I should have fancied that your knowledge of both would have stayed the wish."

"It is precisely what I know which caused me to form it," Mary answered; a little piqued by his tone. "I know Mr. Tarleton; a miserable bachelor, starving on a decayed squirealty, with a grim miserly old father. I know Miss Stratton; a rich, amiable little thing, without attractions for a better style of man; and without nerve to use them if she had. And, besides all this, she rejoices in doing good, and can hear the catechism repeated patiently for the millionth time. Why, to listen to the 'Lady of the Pirate's Isle' would be quite holiday fare to her."

This was all very droll and very witty;

but it was the drollery and the wit of another sphere. The imagination of Mr. Leigh and the exquisite grace of Mary had contributed to place her in a higher one; and it was distasteful to him to find, that, relapsing from the beautiful evidences of feeling he at times could perceive in her, she was contented to be the everyday trifler of an everyday world. He therefore said, almost reproachfully: "You might know Mr. Tarleton as a selfish coxcomb, who takes irreligion for philosophy; and impious daring for wisdom. No good can come from his influence. Augusta Stratton, you must feel, is sincere; and zealous in all things good, however deficient she may be in attractions, or in mental culture. Besides this, she lives but for one good object; and that alone lifts her above the light of that miserable Tarleton. But Miss D'Arc," he added quickly, "however lowly you may think of her, she loves you truly. Will you, then, not do one kindness to her? Take your place instantly

by her side, and thus protect her from assiduities which perplex her, from protestations which to her simple and credulous mind may substantiate a claim, at least to gratitude."

Mary rose involuntarily, moved by his earnestness, and looking to him for further directions.

"You see her eyes have been long seeking you," he said, and he made a movement towards Miss Stratton; who, as he had described, had been from time to time looking anxiously towards them. Mary passed immediately across the room, and took the vacant chair by her friend; Mr. Leigh standing aloof.

Mary, however, found that what at the distance had the appearance of desperate, straight-forward wooing, was in fact merely a covert attack; the poet-lover being merely repeating a canto of that most amatory of poems, 'The Lady of the Pirate's Isle.' But as, during all this time, the two Miss Harcourts were executing a duet on the piano-forte of

singular length, and unmatched din and discord, it had obliged a greater vociferation and force of expression; which had given his poetic recital all the character of an ardent declaration. Their interposition, nevertheless, was gratefully received; and a little, cold, trembling hand, pressed that of Mary in thankfulness; while the meek blue eyes, upturned to the Curate, seemed to associate him in the protection afforded.

The conversation now in a measure became general; but Mary, who with a delicate tact had felt that unwittingly she had jarred upon some chord within his bosom inimical to harmony, spoke little. There was a deference, a humility in her manners, perhaps more winning than when most conscious of the potency of her many and subtile attractions. With gentle and tender attentions towards Miss Stratton, she seemed also to attempt making amends for what might have appeared sarcasm; though

uttered merely in thoughtlessness, and in the partial confusion with which the Curate's manner so often and so strangely affected her. He seemed to understand her motives, and to appreciate them; and there was a tacit commendation implied by looks and bearing, which touched the master-spring in her bosom—the desire of approbation; and imparted a glow of happiness, that threw its tinge on all around her.

The two long, drowsy hours which generally succeed a dull dinner, with every minute appearing twice its usual length, now had passed with bright rapidity; and Mary heard with wonder Mrs. Calthorpe's *jubilate*, as the last carriage was heard driving from the hall door. Even when sinking in sleep, pleasant recollections of the past evening flitted across her thoughts. They scarcely assumed form or outline; but still there were impressions that amidst all the sternness and ascetism of the

Curate's character, there was much indulgent feeling towards herself; with a sympathy all the more gratifying, because she felt that it was rather involuntarily than willingly acceded.

CHAATER X.

"The superior prerogative of birth, when it has obtained the sanction of time and popular opinion, is the plainest and least invidious of all distinctions among mankind."—GIBBON.

THE next morning at breakfast, Mrs. Calthorpe, who was evidently labouring under much mental disquietude, announced to Mary and the Admiral, that the housekeeper had just made the distressing communication, that the postman had failed in bringing up the basket of fish, expected by that morning's mail; and that he had even gone so far, as to surmise the

awful fact, that no fish had arrived from town. But this was not the only misery. This same malefick letter-carrier, who had failed to bring the fish, had left a letter from the Dowager Lady Lorimer, announcing that, in consequence of the sudden illness of a relative, herself and son were obliged to proceed immediately to London, from which place the letter was dated.

There was no particular affection between the Lorimers and the Calthorpes; but this information was felt to be peculiarly disastrous, inasmuch as there was no one else of rank, within reach, who could be asked to meet Lord and Lady Maldyn, who were just come into the neighbourhood, having taken Belmont, a place belonging to Mrs. Calthorpe's brother, for the hunting season; and this was their first dinner.

Words are not necessary to paint such common misfortunes as fish, and, what are emphatically called, the "best people" failing at a dinner party. The poet says: "He best shall paint them, who has felt them most." Everybody has felt

them; therefore, everybody can paint them. Indeed, they are disasters of such common occurrence, that it might almost be thought that fishmongers and nobility had a pleasure in thwarting the hopes of country Amphytrions; and made a league to deprive their banquets of their main-springs, and that, too, in defiance of every precautionary arrangement.

"Something must be done," Mrs. Calthorpe said, having given a proper pause for dismay, and now resorting to action. "Our table looks so desolate, with only twelve; and there is no young man to do the sporting talk with Lord Maldyn, now young Lorimer won't come. I wish, Admiral, that, instead of riding with Miss D'Arc this morning, you would take the car and drive into Deirham, to see what has become of this tiresome fish. You might meet some one who would not mind coming as a *bouche trou*. That miserable Tarleton and his Pirate's Isle would be better than nothing. You might ask Bertie Clive also."

'Or Mr. Leigh," Mary suggested quietly; tak- infinite pains to dismantle a chicken's pinion of ry vestige of meat, as she spoke. "I think you l that Lord Maldyn was at Eton with Captain enden—he might possibly know Mr. Leigh."

"A very good idea, Mary," Mrs. Calthorpe l, catching at the notion; "but I wish this rate would dress like other people—he is lly gentlemanly. However, do you ask n, Admiral, and some one else; and bring m and their carpet-bags up with you in the . They can dress and sleep here."

Mary looked up so pleased at the arrange- at, that Admiral Calthorpe caught the look; said, smiling:

'Come, Miss D'Arc, you will make us picious if you look so animated on this tter. We cannot suffer our Curate either make a conquest or a convert of you. It uld be a terrible look-out. Adieu chess, eu waltzing, adieu all the pretty things of s life. Henceforth, your existence would be

rolled up in worsted stockings and the Society's tracts."

Mary laughed at the image, alleging that she believed Mr. Leigh thought her by far too profane for conversion or conquest. Mrs. Calthorpe quite agreed in this opinion; adding, merrily, that Mary might be consoled, however, as she had a much better conquest in view for her—one unexceptionable in fortune and position, and who, withal, did not wear Joe Sims's coats.

The Admiral looked quickly up, saying:

"Do you mean your brother?"

Mrs. Calthorpe nodded assent. The idea did not seem to please him; and, rising from the breakfast-table to prepare for his expedition, he said, gravely:

"I should recommend no one to interfere with the delicacy of marrying, or giving in marriage. It is an office only belonging to parents, or those in the position of parents. It involves the responsibility of shaping another's

destiny, and intrenches on the attributes of Providence."

With this *dictum* the Admiral left the room, his wife, looking somewhat confused, following him; but Mary soon forgot all the matrimonial part of the conversation, to calculate the chances of the Curate's accepting the dinner invitation.

All went well. Mary had taken a long, solitary walk on the nice, dry, gravel walks of the beautiful grounds surrounding the Lodge, which, even at that wintry season, looked bright and smiling, with shrubberies of glossy evergreens and sloping lawns; and had retired, after luncheon, to the dressing-room appropriated to her, with one of the latest imported volumes from Hookham, when a message from Mrs. Calthorpe apprized her, that the Admiral was returned with two gentlemen and a fish.

Mary's toilette was completed before the half-hour bell had rung, so anxious was she to learn who the chance guests might be that

the Admiral had found; and she descended into the drawing-room, hoping ardently that one might be Mr. Leigh, for whom her interest increased, in proportion as she found her awe of him abating, and the frowns and dark looks she had occasionally encountered from him less frequent.

On entering the drawing-room, she found the Admiral with Mr. Tarleton and the Curate basking in that firebank, which an experienced housemaid usually conjures up before dinner. They a little dispersed as she entered; Mr. Tarleton greeting her with feigned pleasure—she knew that he disliked her, though she could hardly say why—Mr. Leigh greeting her with unfeigned pleasure, though he left it to the other gentlemen to amuse her; retreating to an ottoman on the opposite side to herself.

As usual, when the opportunity occurred, the Admiral was discussing periodical literature with the Poet; who, in his egotism, never

tiring of an argument, which might be brought to have reference to himself, came ever willingly to the attack.

Although apparently listening to the wordy war, Mary was in reality in quiet observance of Mr. Leigh; whose head, alone appearing above the rising cushions of the ottoman, bore more strongly than ever the remarkable likeness to the beautiful picture of San Lorenzo, which had once so charmed her. There was the same fine oval of face, the open brow, the straight nose and clearly-defined nostril, the firm set of the mouth, the slight hollowness of the cheeks which spoke of vigils, and the dark whiskers clustering round the rather lengthened face, contributing by contrast to its olive paleness. Mary had so lost herself in this study, which, under cover of the fire-screen that she held before her face, had been made secretly and with but little interruption, that she actually started when the Admiral,

who believed her listening all the while, referred to her, saying:

"Do you not agree with me, Miss D'Arc, in thinking that reviews are a wholesome sort of preventive check to the rank growth of the literature of the present day; which, even with it, falls in such avalanches from the press, we can't give it shelf-room or binding; and so let it find its level in our nurseries and butler's pantries?"

Mary, who was too true to pretend to knowledge she did not possess, disclaimed, with simplicity, all power of forming an opinion. Mr. Leigh came to her assistance; and volunteered the remark, that there was a strange difference in the position of the literary men of the past, and of the present age: for that, while our libraries were composed chiefly of the productions of the former, it was known that the genius which had composed them had languished in penury and obscurity.

The Admiral acquiesced in the truth of the observation; comparing the enterprise of the modern publishers, and the ravenous appetite of the reading public, to vast-forcing frames, which occasionally sent forth good fruit; but certainly fostered vast quantities of *fungi*, which required the reviewer's pen to destroy.

Mr. Tarleton understood perfectly that the Admiral would imply that the 'Lady of the Pirate's Isle' ranged with the *fungi*; and, fretted by his defence of the reviewers, whom he considered his arch-enemies, said savagely, that, as far as regarded the authors and critics of the present day, he began to consider they might be classed with those mentioned by Boileau, who—

> "D'argent affamés
> Mettent leur Apollon aux gages d'un Libraire,
> Et font d'un art devin un métier mercénaire."

Further discussion was impeded by the entrance of Mrs. Calthorpe; and very soon the

noise of carriages in the drive announced the gathering of the party.

Lord and Lady Maldyn, who lived at the greatest distance, arrived the last; and there was that degree of curiosity created by their entrance, which all new-comers into a neighbourhood must expect to excite.

The very first glance showed that Lady Maldyn was exceedingly lovely, and dressed with a simplicity, which evinced either a Puritan's spirit, or a contempt for all the jewellery and adornment, which, as a city heiress, she might be expected to favour.

In Lord Maldyn Mary recognized a Captain Spottiswode of the Life Guards, who had been one of her most assiduous partners at the time when her engagement to Lord Brandistone lent her an *éclat*, which, however, her own attractions might have claimed for her. Lord Maldyn was charmed with the encounter; sorry to hear of Lady Leverton's delicate health; and inquired after the San Steffano's, all in the same

reath. But his Lordship had the art of tting out a greater number of words, with a sser expenditure of breath, than any other an living.

Algernon Spottiswode, Baron Maldyn, was nown by every one; and was one of those neral popularities, who every one feels they ust profess to like, whatever their individual timation might be. This favour gave him mmunity to say, to do, to go, to come, to now, to cut, to quiz, to pet, just as he liked; nd when Mrs. Calthorpe heard the never-ading talk his Lordship maintained during he whole time they were at table, she smiled herself at the idea of her previous anxiety fill up the vacant places, to guard against he dullness the two noble strangers might ust among the Aborigines.

The calm of the drawing-room was quite othing after all this animation; and Mrs. althorpe, as she sunk into one of her silken *rgères*, doubted whether, after all, the stolid

silence of Sir Henry Acton did not make him a more desirable right-hand support at a dinner-table, than this noisy Baron.

The low whisperings of the ladies assembled, who had been selected rather on account of their position, than their assimilation with each other, was like the breathing of night winds, as, in *company voices*, they asked lady-like questions of each other; and was almost as provocative of sleep. At length, one, by way of showing Lady Maldyn of what high *ton* were her new neighbours, asked Mrs. Calthorpe if she was going to the Marchioness of Desborough's concert.

"I have received a card," was the reply; "and so has Mrs. Denham, the surveyor's wife; so has the organist's family—and so, in short, has every one."

"A canvassing party, I suppose?" inquired Lady Maldyn, who was only second to her husband in chattering; a sort of lesser talker to do the drawing-rooms. "An electioneering

ambuscade, where people sell their votes for a wafer and ice *à la vanille ?*"

"No, it is for nothing political that the Marchioness gives these parties." Mrs. Calthorpe said, laughing at Lady Maldyn's quaintness.

"For popularity then?" asked Lady Maldyn; "ah! that's a great mistake. These *omnium gatherums* please no one. All the honour and glory of visiting grandees is lost, the instant that you find they have gone lower than yourself for company; and, besides this, just where the line of demarcation is drawn, there must be an ill-feeling created. Some one is excluded, who feels on all points as unexceptionable as some one who is admitted; and, therefore, cannot distinguish what has gained them suffrage, beyond the caprice of the great lady who gives the party."

"I agree entirely with you, Lady Maldyn," Mrs. Calthorpe replied; rather pleased to hear opinions so consonant with her own. "But

I do not fancy that the desire of popularity is quite the motive for these general parties; indeed, the good deeds and the amiable and distinguished character of the Marchioness are all sufficient for that end. I believe it to be entirely good-nature. Her Ladyship likes to see people happy; and, when she sees them all dressed in their best, and wandering through her beautiful rooms, she fancies that they must be so. But I, for one, am an exception, and find it an exceeding nuisance to be thrown into society with exactly the second-rate people, whom I have been avoiding all the year before, and who take advantage of the meeting, to improve an acquaintance I have been, as it were, shirking, rather than offensively cutting short. And thus my gentle measures are all spoilt, by the circumstance of the Marchioness choosing to extend her invitations to a class I consider inferior to my own."

"But why do you go?" Lady Maldyn asked archly.

"That is precisely the question I ask myself," Mrs. Calthorpe answered. "And still year after year I do go, and endure all the same *désagrémens*. The first I have told you: that of being mixed up with disagreeable people, whom I could have gone on for ever dexterously avoiding, without hurting their feelings, but to whom, in this forced encounter, I am obliged to betray that I wish to decline their acquaintance. The second is, that awkwardness of finding yourself a guest in a lady's house, with whom you are not on visiting terms, but have entered it with a crowd, and with the crowd depart. Of course I understand the difference of rank between the Marchioness and myself. It is a distinction which one feels as well disposed to respect, as that of old age, and requires no greater effort of good breeding. But, while fully recognising this distinction,—one which Gibbon tells us is the 'plainest and least invidious,'—I consider myself eligible as an associate, if the

Marchioness thinks fit to make my acquaintance. And it is here my *amour propre* takes the alarm. Lady Desborough makes my acquaintance, but does not admit me into her society. And then I turn sulky"—Mrs. Calthorpe continued smiling—"and declare that I will accept no more invitations to the Abbey. I am even now balancing between the evils of going to a party, where I shall meet all the *bourgeoisie* of the neighbourhood, mixed of course with a few court cards; or, by staying away, lay myself open to the charge of incivility to an excellent and highborn woman, and that, because she does not admit me into her intimacy."

At this moment, Lord Maldyn, heading the gentlemen, entered the drawing-room; and, as was his wont, immediately placed himself on the centre of the hearth-rug, and, with his hands in each of the pockets of his silk-lined coat, offered a solution to Mr. Dyckerson's witty conundrum, "What is an Englishman's fireside?"

"What are you talking about, my dear?" he said, *sotto voce*, to his wife; impatient at being a moment out of the thick of a discussion.

"Of the bore that Lady Desborough's sweeping *soirées* are;" she replied, sinking back on the sofa, knowing that it was now the hour of her Lord's ascendancy.

"It is indeed a bore," he said rapidly, immediately taking up the idea. "A bore to the inviter and to the invited. Those things never answer. There you see aristocrats keeping their heads erect, and their eyes averted, fearing to encounter the snobocrats, and annoyed at being mixed up with them. While they, poor things, creep about pale, and in cold perspirations, divided between their admiration of fine things, and their awe of fine people. And, though Mrs. Popkins may boast the next day that the Marchioness was vastly agreeable to her company, you may take it as a fact that no one is satisfied with such a party, though given with the kindest intentions. No, no; rely

upon it, Mrs. Calthorpe, as England is now constituted, this endeavour to mix all classes, without consideration of their prejudices or self-appraisement, will never do but for a crowned head. Kings and Queens are not supposed to enter into the niceties which divide society, and may have people in crowds, and then turn them out again, as we do Sunday-school children when we treat them with tea and buns. But nothing under royalty should attempt this. A merchant, or a professional man, who, in London, from his personal claims, finds himself on terms of intimacy with Peers and potent Signors, won't stand being placed where his actual rank in life, as taken in the abstract, would place him. It is just the same with country-people. A half-pay officer, or any needy gentleman may, by refinement of taste and habits, eschew from the circle of his acquaintance, all but those of the same way of thinking with himself; and, possibly, have only intimacy with men of superior rank or condition.

A noble Lord comes into the country; and, without ascertaining his exact standing, thinks to do him honour by asking him to his table with others, in the same grade with himself; that is, as far as a stranger can see: but, instead of honouring, he just hurts the poor man, ruffling all his little vanities and prejudices. The day is gone by, when the simple fact of dining with a Peer was in itself distinction. Why, the very term Patrician and Plebeian are becoming words of naught;" continued Lord Maldyn, not allowing any interruption by his extreme volubility. "The dyke between them has been sapped by a flood of wealth on the one hand, assisted by a certain down-falling as to morals and manners on the other; and perhaps a few cosmopolitan tendencies, which lead them, as it did Rasselas before them, beyond the exclusive enclosure provided for them. The irruption of the Scythians never worked such changes in an existing state of things, as have the inter-marriages of wealthy commoners with

the Danaes of the peerage. 'Il provient tout de cela,' as Talleyrand says. But, whatever may be the cause, no one can deny that the barriers are down. You may be asked to a party consisting wholly of men of rank, which in the scale of fashion or consequence would be infinitely inferior to that next door, where there may not be a single person of title. I believe, after all, that it is position which must now be considered as titles and quarterings; and position, remember, is only given to intellectual and social superiority, without which, even the *millionaire* may be passed over. However, such is the dislocation of society, no one can go by rule; and the nobles themselves can hardly know which to stand out for in their associates,—rank, wealth, or social influenee. I daresay you will think me a sort of *Egalité* for the confession, Mrs. Calthorpe; but I'll give you my honour that with my wife's father, who made a fortune by fish-sauce, I always met a better set of people than at my own father's table;

who had the fancy, common to some old English Barons, of being what we, as schoolboys, used to call 'cock of the walk.' But I say Miss D'Arc, he is not the only example we have known of this coming off the pedestal for society;" he added, looking archly at Mary, who, together with the other ladies in the circle, was in mute attention to this curiously long, but rapid oration. "Your friend Brandiston's musterings in Grosvenor Square, were not *au plus distingué*, were they?"

She smiled, but blushed violently at the sudden and rather ill-timed remark; and, involuntarily to herself, her eyes turned to Mr. Leigh. His were fixed with serious scrutiny on herself, which, in a measure, added to her embarrassment. However, Lord Maldyn observed nothing of this; but, jumping at once from a subject to which, without the least compunction, he had confined the attention of all present, he continued:

"By the way, Miss D'Arc, do you sing as beautifully as you did in the old days? Pelham of ours, who was stark staring mad in love with you, had a quarrel with old Lygon, as to which sang best, you or Malibran. Come, let us sing." And so saying, Lord Maldyn, giving his hand to Mary, led her to the piano-forte.

She was glad of the interruption which this offered to his retrospective remarks; and, obeying his wishes sang, each *morçeau* that he drew from the pile of music that lay on the piano-forte; some of which he sang with her. They had drawn a little crowd around them, charmed with the beautiful music which was executed: Mary in general having chosen songs of a much simpler character.

She looked round once to see whether Mr. Leigh was among the listeners; but observed him in close confabulation with Lady Maldyn; both bending over a little table, at which he

was making notes, apparently from her dictation. In spite of herself, she felt in a measure mortified at this disregard of that, of which he had professed to be so great an admirer. The reflection also struck her, that, although she had suggested the invitation being sent to him, as yet they had scarcely exchanged a word. The idea disturbed her. Her voice became less brilliant, and she begged to be excused singing more. But Lord Maldyn was not to be denied. A perfect Nero in society, where he felt himself of consequence, he abated nothing of his tyranny. One more song she must sing; and he would show her some improvements in it afterwards: and he placed the *Paga fui* of Winter, before her.

Mary began it listlessly and with indifference; but the plaintiveness of the air, so descriptive of passionate regret, found as it were an echo in her bosom. Not that she identified herself

with the desolate Proserpine, breathing forth recollections of lost happiness, which the absence of one had blighted; still, the perfect hopelessness of grief with which she uttered the words "*più non posso dir cose, con me Cerere non è,*" thrilled through all who heard them; and a murmur of praise arose as she struck the concluding chord.

Raising her eyes, they encountered those of Mr. Leigh, who was now standing at the end of the piano-forte, fixed upon herself. There was an expression of commiseration in them, mingled with deep and ardent tenderness, that gave her for an instant the same sensation at her heart, which sudden fright does. The next moment, the interrupted current of her blood seemed to flow with a double impetus. She felt agitated and confused. A search for her gloves and handkerchief among the music on the piano-forte, enabled her in a measure to dissemble this. The gloves were found and

given to her by Mr. Leigh. He gave them without speaking, and she took them as silently, without even raising her eyes; and yet, at the minute she felt more in affinity with him, as a mesmeriser might say, than she had ever yet been with any earthly creature.

Tennyson talks of the potency of "love-languid eyes" dwelling, "one earnest, earnest moment," upon another; and the difficulty under such, and parallel circumstances, of holding "passion in a leash." Such mystical conflicts,—such "bright precipitates of soul"—must be left to the poet; the biographer of a young woman—whose like every one's acquaintance might furnish—need only relate, that, with a heart swelling with emotion, Mary yet turned calmly away; and, joining a group of ladies near the chimney, found tranquillity in the rose and mignonette conversation there going on.

Very soon after this, the party began to

disperse. Before leaving the room, Lady Maldyn called the Curate to her, and pressed him warmly to visit them at Belmont; Lord Maldyn seconding her wishes.

In the absence of the Admiral, who had taken some other lady to her carriage, Mr. Leigh offered his arm to Lady Maldyn to conduct her to the hall; and, as the last guest quitted the apartment, Mrs. Calthorpe said joyously to Mary, "How glad I am that you made me ask Mr. Leigh. The Maldyns knew him slightly before, and have been saying all sorts of fine things about him. You know Lord Maldyn has one or two good livings in his gift. This renewal of his acquaintance and favourable impression with them, may be a famous thing some day for the poor Curate."

The return of the Admiral and Mr. Leigh from the hall obviated all necessity for reply, and in a few minutes Mrs. Calthorpe and Mary

retired; leaving the gentlemen to the tray of soda water, and any discussion to which the antagonistic propensities of Mr. Regulus Tarleton might lead.

CHAPTER XI.

"Here only weak
Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance."

MILTON.

THERE is a light that shineth on the heart of woman once; bright, genial, and silent; and all existence glows beneath its influence. The past, the present, the future, stand out gaily, seen through a glowing medium; and she knows not what has wrought this change. She feels her steps elastic; she knows that her eye beams bright, her lips open in glad smiles; but she dreams not of the power that has

worked the double life. What, if a voice had whispered in her ear of love? "Of love that never found its earthly close." Its sequel, "streaming eyes and breaking hearts." She would have disbelieved it. If love had occurred to her, as a solution of all this luxury of existence, she would have pictured him as poets and painters picture him.—

"A smoothfaced, glorious thing,
With thousand blessings dancing in his eyes."

The idea that those cheeks could be tear-stained, those eyes sorrow-dimned, would never have presented itself.

However, it was with this light, this sweet enhancement of life's joys, this magic, but unknown change wrought in her, that Mary entered the breakfast-room the next morning. It is the moment when the fair are fairest, the glad are gladdest; and the Curate, who was alone when she advanced towards the

ample wood-fire blazing on the low hearth, could scarcely conceal the admiration her radiant loveliness called forth.

With gentle cordiality she gave him her hand as the morning salutation. A dream had again made her jump over months of preliminary acquaintanceship; but a slight blush mantled her cheeks, as she met the deep look of his inquiring eyes; and she turned to the breakfast table to examine the little heap of letters and papers placed there. Opening a newspaper, which with a show of occupation enabled her to speak with every day tones—which with him only she felt difficulty in observing—she said lightly: "Well, Mr. Leigh, how did you like our last night's amusements? Have you dreamt of the pretty Lady Maldyn and her costume *à la vestale?*"

He smiled slightly at her question, and the supposition it playfully inferred; but, shaking his head, said, "One idea, one sound has

haunted me the whole night." He then repeated with a sad, yet searching expression:

"'Paga fui fu' lieta un dì,
Ogni ben fu solo in me;
Più non posso dir così!
Con me Cerere non è!'

"What a world of sorrow those words describe. And in their simplicity they speak so of a girl's sorrow.

"Those lines of Dante:

"'Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria:'

"On the contrary, describe a poet's grief. There is imagination enhancing the sorrow. But there is a plaintive matter of fact in the simple words '*Più non posso dir così*,' that, in the tone with which you last night sang them, could make one weep with her who so uttered them."

He was silent for a few moments; and then said rapidly, though with occasional hesitation, which however seemed more to result from anxiety than embarrassment;—and questions, which in another would have been intrusive, seemed in him almost to betoken a spirit of tenderness:—"Miss D'Arc, last night when Lord Maldyn alluded to Lord Brandiston, you were distressed, you turned deadly pale. Lady Maldyn told me that at one time you were engaged to the Earl. Will you tell me this. Had the exquisite plaintiveness of the song you sung, your acute perception of its force, had it any connection with the memory called up by the words of Lord Maldyn?"

Mary looked at the Curate in surprise, and paused ere she replied, as if to judge of the spirit in which so leading a question was asked. She met his full dark eyes raised to her own, for he had again resumed his seat, from which he had risen as she entered. It

was full of searching scrutiny, mixed nevertheless with a look of compasionate anxiety.

It was that look which reconciled her to so unusual an investigation; while it seemed to ask for a candid reply. It was difficult to find suitable words. At length she said simply: "You attribute emotion to me which I did not feel; and the recollections that Lord Maldyn called forth of Lord Brandiston were calculated to mortify, not afflict me. The words of the song gained all their expression from the music. If I seemed piteous," she added, slightly smiling and blushing, "it was from no by-gone feeling."

Mr. Leigh looked dissatisfied. He then said: "Do you tell me, Miss D'Arc, that a broken engagement leaves no sorrow?"

"None," she said firmly, adding: "perhaps I ought to shrink from this avowal, which betrays with how little feeling that engagement was made."

"You ought to be deeply thankful that

it was never fulfilled," Mr. Leigh said energetically. "Yours is not the heart to have found its duties light, where its affections did not point them out."

There was an involuntary warmth of expression in his words, which, while it pleased Mary, in a measure disturbed her; and she felt relieved by the entrance of the Admiral and Mrs. Calthorpe. But short as this interview had been, it seemed to have established a feeling of confidence between herself and the Curate, which was shown by a kindness and interest where there had been constraint and watchfulness. Mary felt that Mr. Leigh knew her better, and liked her better. This consciousness gave a glow of satisfaction and happiness.

During that breakfast, the Calthorpes felt that there were deeper stores of fascination in the character of Mary, than they had yet given her credit for. Even the acerb Mr. Tarleton seemed to feel the influence of

her gentle gaiety. There was less of coquetry and more of nature in her manner; but even while maintaining the customary playful warfare with the Admiral, she at times betrayed a sensibility and seriousness unusual to her.

The Curate spoke little; but she felt that his eyes were incessantly turned towards her. At times her own encountered them. They were not withdrawn; and, with the penetrating looks which seemed trying to read her inmost soul, there was a tenderness, which, while it caused her quickly to avert her own glance, in spite of herself, called a tremour to her manner.

Immediately after breakfast, the two visitors took their departure for the village. Mary did not return to the Arches until the next day. She was even then full of excitement; and poor Lady Leverton, whom an increased delicacy in the chest rendered almost a prisoner during the winter months, felt delighted that her child should have made so agreeable a

visit, and that it was still in her power to mix in gay society. She surmised no further reason for Mary's increased vivacity.

The Maldyns called very soon at the Arches. Mary felt that Mr. Leigh must shortly pay them a morning visit; but she looked in vain for him. Once her heart beat quickly, feeling certain that a ring at the hall-door must be him, having just seen his little skye-terrier run over the field; but Mrs. Calthorpe alone was announced; and Mary then guessed that a gambol with her little poodle had been the attraction of the Curate's Rob, who had doubtless encountered them in the village. She felt dull and ill-used at the disappointment.

Mrs. Calthorpe called to discuss the approaching concert at the Abbey; and was still full of perturbation at being mixed up with the underlings, which the Marchioness at these Christmas parties called around her.

"I see nothing in this," Mary said, per-

suasively; sorry to loose the kind chaperon—one of the effects which would result from this susceptibility. "You neither take or lose a position, by being at such general assemblies; and that wee bit of pride which shrinks from visiting, where you are not sought personally, i surely misplaced in this instance."

"It may be so," Mrs. Calthorpe said, musingly; "and yet I do not think I am proud. As a girl, I was the companion of those much above me, our relative positions leading to an intimacy which the difference of rank would otherwise have precluded. As the steward's daughter, I was too happy to be patronized by the high-born children of my father's employer. Now things are different. As Admiral Calthorpe's wife, I must not be patronized, *cela sent le parasite.* I am then either in the Marchioness' society, or I am merely admitted with the crowd of inferior people, which her kindness invites to the Abbey.

The first, I know that I am not. That chilling and excessive civility, the care with which everything in conversation of a private interest is avoided, the punctuality of the return visit, the absence of anything like a volunteer visit from her Ladyship; all prove me without the pale, and the intention of keeping me there. Now, I cannot be 'let in' with a crowd inferior to myself in position, to any party beneath those which have occasionally been mustered at the Pavillion or Windsor Castle. Humble, cringing crowds are an appanage to royalty. No one would wish to see them abolished, except perhaps the crowned heads to whom they render homage. But they are a sort of moral regalia, and therefore to be kept up; serving as well to *impression* the mob, as all those shining things which the Beefeaters watch over. But, I must confess," and here Mrs. Calthorpe's large blue eyes flashed with a strange lustre, "I cannot

endure to be thus on sufferance with those, between whom and myself the accident of a title and birth is the only difference;—education, ideas, refinement and habits of life being all the same. If the title is to make this decided distinction, it should exclude me from their society. But if it do not exclude, it should not be called up as a repellant, where the usual and conventional deference to rank has not been transgressed."

"I grant all this, but still I cannot quite understand you;" Mary said. "I look to society, as I would to a theatre—for amusement; and would always choose the best, for the same reason that I would prefer the King's Theatre to Astley's. But wherever I might be, I should never feel higher or lower than those with whom, for the moment, I am associated. I feel but as an item of a great whole; in which, as regards its good or bad taste, the honour and glory of the person who

gives the party is alone implicated. Why cannot you look at the Abbey concert in the same light?"

"No, Mary, dear; I must get out of it. It ruffles me, and that is quite sufficient reason for absenting myself, when I can do no good by going. I shall have a good excuse to offer; as I expect my brother in England, and it is possible that I may go to town to meet him. You must ask Mrs. Gordon or Mrs. Harcourt to chaperon you."

Mary still laughed at Mrs. Calthorpe's scruples, unable to understand them. Society to her was always joyous and exciting. All personal feelings, all sense of self was merged in the delight she had in pleasing;—all her estimate of others influenced by their powers of being pleased. Her peculiar worldliness consisted more in that polish which observes a smiling courteousness to all, rather than in that quick appreciation of consequence and adroit

evasion of little people, which is the occasional sign of the world-taint.

Mary was not sorry to be under Mrs. Gordon's charge at the Abbey concert. She knew that Mr. Leigh was to be there, and that she should see more of him by being with his friends than with those less intimate. However, much of the pleasure she anticipated was lessened by the circumstance, that, in spite of all those feelings of interest and confidence to which he had given rise at their last meeting at Admiral Calthorpe's—and which he had seemed to share—he had not been induced to pay one single visit to the Arches during the three intervening weeks.

Notwithstanding this, there was pleasure in seeing him approach them, as they stood in the magnificent concert-room at Desborough Abbey. There was pleasure in witnessing his cordial greeting of Mrs. Gordon and Miss Stratton; and to feel that the constrained, almost chilling manner in which he first addressed her, vanished,

as by magic, before the unaffected satisfaction which she betrayed in the meeting.

Mary had long been under the common mistake of fancying that her own impressions were those generally received by others; so that her first notion of the uncourtly and forbidding aspect of the Curate, she believed to be the light in which he usually appeared. The new form under which she now beheld him—a being standing aloof from others, singular and superior in mind as in person—gave him a greater interest, from imagining that he stood forth "a bright and particular star," solely for herself. She never guessed that half the young ladies of his flock, looked on him as a sun, worthy their heart's best worship.

From Mary's attendance at Church being strictly confined to the morning service, at which time the Curate never officiated, she had never, as the conventional and conventicle phrase expresses it, "sat under him." With every inclination to change her habits in this

respect, she had wanted the courage or the conscience so to do. Had she ever beheld his expressive and beautiful countenance brought into favourable relief by the snowy folds of the surplice—had she ever heard the deep music of his voice, now in the imploring, thrilling tone of earnest prayer, now in the calm and manly force of the teacher—she might have understood the estimation in which he was held by many of the feminine and youthful portion of his congregation; and perhaps discerned that they were all travelling to the same end, though by a different road; theirs probably the most frequented.

In truth, there is in the minds of most females, with the veneration experienced for those who lead their souls to the high and holy aspirations for which they were created, a strange mixture of human feeling. Possibly it may partake a little of the nature of that felt by the Roman peasant, for the exquisite loveliness of the Virgin, before whose shrine he

kneels; when religion lends a greater susceptibility to the excellence of things created. Still, in the sentiments experienced by a young woman for a minister, whose holy influence is seconded by earthly attractions, pure though ardent, humble though persevering, there seems as it were a faint vestige of early creation—a relic of patriarchal habits and associations;—when, besides other relations, man stood between the helpless loving creature of his household and her God, a Priest.

The Curate was aware of this subtile spirit, running through the fibres of a woman's heart; which, even at moments of its highest exaltation, lent something more than deference to the preacher. He knew, too, of those, who had drawn advantage from this conjoint and mysterious sensibility to earthly and heavenly things. In his own person, the knowledge gave a coldness, a caution and reserve to his usual manner towards young women. For other reasons, this reserve was more decidedly pro-

nounced in his demeanour towards Miss D'Arc. She believed that it arose from his preconceived notion, that a woman whose whole life had been passed in dissipation and frivolity, must of necessity be shallow and heartless. She hoped that in time the impression might pass away, and that he would learn to judge her better. Her earnestness in inducing this fairer estimate, made his reserve more difficult to observe; but with some occasional giving way, it had remained tolerably proof against the gentle and cordial fascination of her manner.

At the conclusion of the concert, there was a more general intermixture of the very large party assembled at the Abbey; and though at times Mary could have laughed at the distortion of costume, with which some creditable looking people in their every-day guise, had thought proper to do honour to the Marchioness, —though she could have smiled at the forced courtesy and attentions of the noble hostess

and her daughters towards the one half of their guests — so different to the unostentatious kindness observed towards their own friends; still she thought that, on the whole, Mrs. Calthorpe's sensitive apprehension of things had lost her an agreeable evening.

Mary was standing in the refreshment-room with Mrs. Gordon and her ward, whither Mr. Leigh had attended them, happy in the idea that much of his *sauvagerie* had merged into a tone so much more accordant with her feelings; when Lord Maldyn and a stranger, whom she had previously remarked as having made her the subject of attentive observation, approached them.

Mary liked Lord Maldyn—was amused by his excessive loquacity, his fearlessly expressed sentiments, and withal the little spice of *cancan* with which he seasoned his discourse. Still, she had tact enough to feel, that the sort of conversation he would broach, would not at all assimilate with the tone usually adopted by Mr.

Leigh, nor conduce to her favour in his sight; she was, therefore, glad when his Lordship introduced the tall spectral, marrowless looking stanger to her as Sir William—something—she could not catch the name. His grave, and almost vacant blue eyes, the starch dignity of his form, the compressed lips, the rigid brow, all exacted a serious and formal demeanour on her part; and she fulfilled it with her usual grace and simplicity of manner, though yet with something of a doubled-edged coquetry; designing as much to please him, who she felt was listening to her every word, in spite of Lord Maldyn's verbosity addressed to himself, as him, whom she addressed.

The conversation lingered perhaps longer than she could have wished, and was carried on with that dignified propriety which marks the old French comedy. At length the carriages were announced; when this *ré-chauffé* of a Sir Charles Grandison offered his arm with a deferential courtliness that almost

made her smile; and, as he performed his parting bow, she could have wondered that she had not been congealed into an icicle by so long a conversation with one, more like a spirit from the Frozen Ocean, than a thing of life and respiration. However, she speedily lost all recollection of him, by Mrs. Gordon's question to her ward, whether she had remarked Lady Maldyn's attention to Mr. Leigh. And this did not end there,—the good lady remarked with something like amazement—but she had actually asked for permission to sit in her pew, in the afternoons when the Curate might officiate at Deirham Church. Miss Stratton would not be amazed; but said simply that, although Deirham was so far from Belmont, there was only the little church of High Down nearer. She added that Mr. Leigh had spoken most highly to her of Lady Maldyn; telling her that she had informed him of some new arrangements in the London schools, which he thought, with

fuller descriptions from her Ladyship, he might bring into play at Deirham. Mary could not quite understand why the little heiress' voice faltered, while she made this communication; and was rather disposed to believe there was a little jealousy in any proposed division of her supremacy, which was uncontested as far as the Deirham school went; but an after thought made her consider, that it was probably the motion of the carriage which caused the tremulous tone of Miss Stratton's speech.

CHAPTER XII.

"Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eye some lessened shame,
And I be lessen'd in his love?"

TENNYSON.

A FEW days after the concert at Desborough Abbey, Mrs. Calthorpe called at the Arches to learn all particulars. Mary gave her some amusing descriptions, but still affirmed that she was wrong in not being there.

"No, no;" Mrs. Calthorpe said firmly, "I have acted according to my deliberate opinion,

and therefore feel justified. But," she added, "you have not yet told me how you liked my brother."

Mary opened her eyes.

"Your brother! Dear Mrs. Calthorpe, he surely was not there?"

Mrs. Calthorpe, in her turn, looked mystified, as she said:

"Why he told me that Lord Maldyn, with whom he is staying, presented him to you:—and added, moreover, that you more than fulfilled all the pretty things he has heard of you."

Mary still looked incredulous; saying that the gentleman to whom Lord Maldyn had introduced her, was some one of title.

"Exactly, my dear;" Mrs. Calthorpe said. "Willie has just been to Windsor by the King's command, where he has received the honour of being made a Knight of the Guelphic order."

Mary blushed scarlet. She now felt certain

that the dignified stranger—the starched "Sir William"—must have been the Willie of whom she had heard so much—the diplomatic brother of Mrs. Calthorpe! He was the man of all others, to whom she would have least liked to have shown the deference and attention which she had done; seeing that, in consequence of his large estate and beautiful mansion, he was accounted a marvellous good match in the country; and also that Mrs. Calthorpe had at divers times, hinted the satisfaction it would yield her to see him united to herself.

Mary's thoughts, like lightning, reverted to what Mr. Leigh's impressions must have been, on observing her slight of Lord Maldyn, for the apparent purpose of courting one, of whose identity with the "good match" of the neighbourhood he was probably aware; and of which he would hardly believe her in ignorance.

Mary felt seriously mortified. The spectre

of those vilifying young men at Brighton, who had appended degrading motives to her proceedings in society, rose up before her; and for the moment, the same sense of shame—the same dread of unkind construction oppressed her.

Mrs. Calthorpe could hardly understand Miss D' Arc's confusion; but, in the complacency and hopefulness of human nature as regards its own motives, felt disposed to construe it as favourable to her one darling idea, of finding in her young friend a wife answering to all the requirements of her widowed and fastidious brother.

Mrs. Calthorpe, before taking leave, told Mary that Lady Maldyn proposed asking her to spend the Christmas week at Belmont, whither they were already invited.

Mary murmured something about thinking and believing it would not be possible for her to go; inwardly resolving with that strange

habit of referring everything to one, whose influence each day increased, that Mr. Leigh— through Mrs. Gordon, who she knew was h village gazette—should know that she h refused the invitation to Belmont; and th suffered the opportunity for further meetin with Sir William Aviston to escape her.

That evening a very good reason sprang u for refusing Lady Maldyn's invitation, whenev it might arrive; for, to her great surprise, note reached her from Lady Eloisa Essende dated from High Down, telling her that th had returned unexpectedly there that morning The reason given for this change of plan, an their sudden departure from Lord Ilsea's, w that, from the circumstance of the small-po being in the village, Captain Essenden h been induced, in his extreme care for th little ones, to propose foregoing all th Christmas festivities at the Earl's, and retur ing to their own home. "You must come

and console us, dear Miss D'Arc," the note continued, "for this disappointment, by inducing Lady Leverton to promise that you will both spend your Christmas with us. The weather is so fine, she need not fear the change. Hubert begs me to tell you that he has a splendid collection of duets. He will ride over to the Arches to-morrow, to learn on what day I may send for you. You must not say nay."

The Viscountess, to Mary's great satisfaction, at once decided that they would accept Lady Eloisa's invitation; therefore the next morning, when Lady Maldyn's note reached her, she had an efficient excuse for not going to Belmont, by pleading her engagement with the Essendens.

Before the hour at which it was likely that Captain Essenden would call, Mary failed not to pay her visit to Mrs. Gordon. Full of excitement, and with her cheeks glowing

with a quick walk through the slightly frosty air, on arriving at the Manor House she was shewn into the Library; where, as much to his apparent surprise as her own, she found Mr. Leigh alone, looking over some little account books, containing all the mysteries connected with clothing and coal clubs.

Mary learnt that Mrs. Gordon and her ward had that instant left the room to prepare for walking with him to the village school, where there was to be an examination.

"Oh! what a sacrifice of time and taste this fine sunny morning," Mary said hastily; for the earnest look of pleasure and admiration, with which, in spite of himself, the Curate regarded her, a little confused and embarrassed her.

He smiled as he answered:

"A sacrifice truly; but it is from kindness to me that it is undertaken. My vocation obliges all these things; but it will be two

tiresome hours much lightened by Mrs. Gordon and Miss Stratton's assistance."

For the moment, though the image of meek looking straw bonnets, Denmark satin shoes, coarse cotton stockings, and a *cabas* containing tracts and flannel, always connected themselves with the idea of the lady-attendants of a National school, Mary almost regretted that she was not associated in the work, with those so sedulous in all good things, instead of having called forth the slightly mocking laugh, at her worldly estimation of their labours.

Speaking from these thoughts, she said, with a gentle reproachfulness of tone; "You have never yet taken the trouble to point out to me, in what way I could render myself of some little service in the village. Do you consider me absolutely useless as an *employée?*"

"Not useless;" he replied with sudden warmth of manner, "but equal to everything to which your mind once turned itself — may turn itself." These three last words were

said with an expression of approval, persuasion and authority; which, with the tenderness of his look, would have made her at the minute build a church and endow it, had she the means, and had he directed it. He continued:—"Still, with the impression that your disposition would fit you for every deed of charity, I have conceived the idea that your whole life has been so shielded from the squalor—the debased nature of the poor; that I should shrink from inflicting upon you the pain, which contact with these sad blots in our existence must give."

"Then, because I have already been spoilt, would you still continue the unwholesome system which has made me thus?" Mary asked, while her eyes were upraised to his, with a grateful softness for the kind indulgence of his expressions.

"I would lure you to a sense of the dark realities of this life, rather than force them upon you. I would seek to awaken you,"

he continued anxiously, "to a sense of the high and holy things connected with our being, before I engaged you in a contest with the ignorance and sin, into which half of our earth-bound fellow-creatures are sunk. Miss D'Arc," he added solemnly, and yet with gentleness, "we must have one hand clasped firmly on the Cross—on Eternity—ere we should dare extend the other to the sinking souls around us."

Mary felt the full force of his words. She felt them with terror and humility. A tremour passed over her, and she found the tears rise to her eyes. Involuntarily she extended both her hands towards him. He took them, and held them for an instant firmly within his own. She looked to him anxiously, waiting his further speaking. He was more than usually pale, with an unwonted brilliancy in his eyes. Did he too look through tear drops. She could not tell. Releasing her hand, he

said hurriedly: "We must talk of this again," and turned from her.

She was glad that he did so. There was an emotion—a trouble at her heart, which she could not have conquered, had he uttered another word. He probably saw this, and so spared her further agitation.

They sat for a few minutes in silence, the Curate resuming the survey of the little commercial looking books on the table by his side. The entrance of Mrs. Gordon and Miss Stratton removed the embarrassment, which a longer continuation of this pause might have produced.

How strangely the feelings of Mary resumed their ordinary smooth current, with the first tones and every-day expressions of her friends! The precise, though kind greetings of Mrs. Gordon — her particular inquiries as to the Viscountess's health—her minute account of the actual state of the weather, the accuracy

of which they were all able to judge,—and her imperturbable and machine-like manner would have calmed a spinning Dervish.

Mrs. Gordon reverted to the party at Desborough Abbey; and with the usual *mal-à-propos* which marked her words, though perhaps going a little out of her usual way for their subject, she asked Mary whether she had seen Sir William Aviston since the concert.

As it happened, the question though arising from her recollections of the attention paid to the new Knight, and therefore in itself a subject for embarrassment, was hailed by Mary as affording the opportunity for explaining, that she had been in entire ignorance that the stranger presented to her by Lord Maldyn was the exquisite Diplomatist—the wealthy widower, whose occasional visits to Belmont caused so much excitement amongst the feminine and single population of the district. This was all very satisfactory; but the proof

of her disregard of all these claims to a lady's attention, and the disinterestedness with which she had given him her own, still remained to be shown, by the fact of her having declined to join the party, where Sir William and all his many merits flourished. As long as this refusal on her part remained unproclaimed, so long she considered that the opprobrium, of having shown such decided deference to the "eligible" *par excellence* of the neighbourhood, hung over her.

With all the special superficialities of her previous life,—its tendency to deaden impulse, and subvert direct truthfulness—Mary as yet had not learnt to be a manœuvrer. Her long contact with the world had given her the imperturbable high-breeding, the consummate simplicity and ease of manner, which is the best triumph of art, inasmuch as it is the simulation of a high and perfect nature. It had also—perhaps as a counterpoise to these advantages—thrown a glittering veil over much,

which, unadorned by the false medium lent by fashion, would have appeared anomalous, to those who professed to be guided by laws emanating from Divinity; and, as a consequence, had much lessened her quick apprehension of right and wrong,—those necessary waymarks in life's journey. But still, this contact, usually so fatal to ingenuousness, had left her truthful and powerless, as regarded schemes or policy. Therefore, with some of that abruptness of manner, which those exhibit who speak with a secondary purpose rather than from impulse, and with much of the excitement, left by her conversation with Mr. Leigh—to Mrs. Gordon's remark that the Maldyns were going to have a large party to stay with them during the Christmas week, Mary replied eagerly that she too had received an invitation, but that she had refused it for the much greater pleasure of passing that time with the Essendens, who had just come back to High Down.

While Mrs. Gordon was expressing her surprise at this unexpected return, Mary had leisure to see what effect this announcement of her intention of not joining the gay party assembled at Belmont had upon the Curate. She thought that she had never seen him look more austere, as he too expressed surprise at the unusual circumstance of Captain Essenden passing the Christmas holidays away from his father-in-law's.

Mary elucidated the matter, by expatiating on the amiable anxiety which was thereby shown for the children. But it failed in exciting any demonstration from either of the party; and she arose to depart, averse to detain them longer.

They left the house together; and as they walked down the drive, Miss Stratton asked her timidly, if she would not accompany them to the school; adding, that the presence of strangers impressed more forcibly on the children the weight attached to education.

Mary's heart beat for a moment gladly. It was exactly the moment of proving to Mr. Leigh that she did not shrink from scenes of village usefulness, or dread witnessing the work-a-day aspect of life; while her entrance into duties, to which she knew that he ascribed much importance, could never be began under circumstances less embarrassing to herself.

She looked up, and caught his eye resting eagerly upon her, as if awaiting her answer. It brought the colour to her cheeks; and it was with regret at the moment that she recollected it must be near the time at which Captain Essenden had appointed to call.

She explained this to Miss Stratton; asking her to promise that at some future opportunity she would inaugurate her into this first mystery of a country lady's duties.

As she spoke, Mr. Leigh took out his watch, saying, that if she really wished to accompany them, he should have time to hurry down to the Arches before joining them at the National

School, and would ask Lady Leverton to receive Captain Essenden alone. His looks almost seemed to insist on this arrangement; and he was about to leave them, adding, with some little bitterness, that, as Miss D'Arc was so soon to see her friends at High Down, she could surely spare them that half-hour; when Mary, recollecting that Lady Leverton, having that morning shown a disposition to change her resolves of accompanying her to High Down, would most likely take the opportunity of seeing Captain Essenden alone, to arrange that she should go without her, begged Mr. Leigh to stop; explaining that she herself wished to see Captain Essenden. She then took leave of the school-bound party, and could not fail in observing the very signal expression of dissatisfaction in the Curate's countenance. Miss Stratton, too, looked disturbed; while Mrs. Gordon, who always took upon herself the task of apologising for others, when she conceived them in fault, shook hands with her, saying:

"Yes, yes, my dear; I dare say you are very right to go. No doubt Captain Essenden has a great deal to tell you from Lady Eloisa."

Mary, as she wished them good-morning, thought it was hardly worth while to detain them, to explain, that her wish of associating her mother with the pleasures of the Christmas week, had induced her final resolve; and she left them, asking herself the question, was it thus that those devoted to holy lives resented the very least defalcation from duty in others?

The idea gave her a timid apprehension, that the smooth current of her acquaintance with Mr. Leigh would be ever thus interrupted by feelings of disapprobation. It was not the first time that she had been sensible of incurring blame, though words had not instructed her in the fact or cause.

Her knowledge of what his expectations, as regarded a woman's duties and sphere of action, was so limited, that she feared it would be often thus that she should fall short of his require-

ments. The reflection gave her pain; and she entered her house sad and dissatisfied—sad, that the evident expansion of kind feeling towards herself, as betrayed by Mr. Leigh, should in so short a time contract into coldness and stern disapproval — dissatisfied, that her desire to be all that he could wish her to be, should receive so little indulgence or encouragement, and go such a little way in gaining her the approbation which good intentions might at least obtain.

Any one, less blinded by the honesty and purity of their own impulses than Mary, might have looked for other causes for the undisguised dissatisfaction of the Curate; and found them; and not attributed it to the simple fact of her backwardness in parochial matters. Perhaps her intimacy with Mrs. Gordon and her ward, might have a little disposed her to this view of the Curate's alternate gentleness and severity, as shown to herself. They lived but for such things;

and Mary was aware that it was the great chord of attraction between them and Mr. Leigh: it was, then, natural to consider that her failure in them, was the one stumbling-block.

She was still pondering on all the variety of humour betrayed that morning by the Curate, when Captain Essenden arrived. His animated pleasure at again meeting her infected her, and the affectionate bent of her disposition seemed brought out by his cordiality.

The next day was fixed upon, for their visit to High Down; the objections of the Viscountess being speedily over-ruled. The close carriage was to be sent for her. Every precaution should be taken that she might not feel the move; and, when at High Down in the apartment with the most sunny aspect in the house, the excited Essenden assured her that she should remain as secluded as she pleased.

He was irresistible; and Lady Leverton, never dreaming of looking at his actions

through the dark and microscopic eyes of La Bruyère, who tells us that "Rien ne ressemble mieux à une vive amitié, que ces liaisons que l'intérêt de notre amour nous fait cultiver"—rejoiced in the evidences of friendship from so accomplished a person.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

THE

PERILS OF FASHION.

"Il aimait à conter ce qu'il avait vu; et très souvent son imagination lui offrait, plus que sa mémoire ne lui fournissait."—MÉMOIRES DU CARDINAL DE RETZ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
COLBURN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1852.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.



PERILS OF FASHION.

CHAPTER I.

"I love the bell, that calls the poor to pray,
Chiming from village church its cheerful sound,
When the sun smiles on labour's holy-day,
And all the rustic train are gathered round,
Each deftly dizened in his Sunday's best,
And pleased to hail the day of piety and rest."

SOUTHEY.

CHRISTMAS-DAY was one of those bright snatches with which December sometimes tries to shuffle off the notion of decrepitude, and take upon itself the semblance of autumn.

Mary, with Lady Eloisa and Captain Essenden, and a little detachment from the nursery, walked to the tiny church, belonging to the diminutive parish of High Down, and which, nestling close under the hill, with all its Norman features shewing beneath the velvet coating, furnished by the lichen of many centuries, was the very stage for some of those revivings by which the mediæval mania robs the painter of his picturesque, and the spider of his nest.

There it stood with its crumbling corbels unpolluted by the least stroke of a modern mallet, its time-stained walls without one touch of the gaudy blue and red paint, so dear to the fancy of that most fanciful of beings, the soi-disant Anglo-Catholic. All was original—no playing at the monkish ages. There were little painted lancet windows encrusted with dirt, of one century; the old carved sounding-board suspended high above the pulpit and draped with cobwebs, of another; the dark-blue and

sober looking threadbare cushion on the reading-desk, of another.

All that it owed to modern decoration was the embowering branches of bright holly and ivy; and, filled by a totally rustic congregation, it was a striking scene of that heart-worship, which looks not for æsthetics to occupy the Christian's eyes, who, like Shakespeare's poet, with one glance sees earth and heaven, from the force of the striving spirit within.

There was a calm, a happiness in this simple temple, that could be felt; the bright winter sun shining on all, and making the Christmas branches almost like the blossoming of summer: while the soothing tones and topics of the old preacher, whose discourse was little more than a string of sentences chosen from Scripture, told of the hopes and promises connected with the holy day; and of which the well-thumbed Bibles around, shewed that the auditors were fully able to prove the authenticity.

This mosaic of the holy writings failed in

awakening the attention of Mary, who probably had never listened out a whole sermon in her life. Indeed her past experience of them had been as offering a leisure—a tranquillity for the indulgence of thought, which a busy life had not often afforded. Still the twenty minutes' duration of the unheard sermon awakened a train of novel, and perhaps not unwholesome reflections in her mind—a mind which, whether by her long residence in comparative seclusion, or from other circumstances, had lately learnt to lend itself much more to reverie and soft and tender musings, than had been its wont.

As her eyes wandered around the ample and yet well-filled pew, now, resting on the sweet and tranquil countenance of Lady Eloisa, lovely from its complacency and the reflection shining from it of happy wifehood and maternity; then, on the pretty children, all in their little innocent attitudes of mute and reverent attention, the thought arose to her mind, had she herself been set on a road leading to happiness?

It had taken her through scenes of unfailing gaiety, scenes of high and distinguished concourse; but had it ever produced a quarter of the peaceful enjoyment now felt by those who had turned into the sequestered path of domestic and family interests?—would it ever lead to such? She feared to seek the answer; and feared also that it was now too late to wish it had been different. A sigh rose to her bosom. It was re-echoed. She looked up, and saw Captain Essenden, who, seated in a kind of nook a little behind Lady Eloisa, had not come within the scope of her cursory glances, in intent observance of herself.

She blushed slightly at the moment, almost fearing the train of her thoughts might have been detected; and then smiled at the cowardly idea. Captain Essenden, too, slightly coloured; but he looked grave, and the smile was unreturned.

On their way from church over the smooth green down, where one of the little boys had led

her from the others, Captain Essenden overtook her in a feigned race with one of the other children.

The boys continued their race; their father remained walking silently by Mary's side. At length he said abruptly, and with a slight emotion:

"Of what were you thinking so seriously and sadly at church, Miss D'Arc?—not of Mr. Villiers' sermon."

"Not exactly," Mary answered, with her usual straightforwardness. "The simplicity of your pretty church has put new ideas into my mind; and, while reflecting on and observing the happiness of Lady Eloisa, I began to discern how little likely it is that my life will ever produce a counterpart of such perfect contentment."

The words were simple and without reservation; yet they rang a peal of enchantment in the ears of Captain Essenden. "Lady Eloisa's happiness!" There was a vein of vanity within

his breast which knew well how to turn those words into nutriment.

Mary ran on with her little racing charge, unheedful of the construction to be placed on her expressions. She would have repelled with indignant scorn any second meaning that could be applied to them.

The evening with its Christmas tree, charged with glittering toys—the smiling servants—the tumultuous joy of the children—the tender satisfaction of the mother, was another scene of domestic rejoicing, new in every way to Mary; and, as they parted for the night, she pressed a kiss on the fair smooth forehead of Lady Eloisa, wishing, with earnest sincerity, that her happiness should be ever unalloyed.

Poor Mary! She little thought what a fatal instrument she could be for its undoing—that this lovely and gentle friend might shrink from her with horror, as from the serpent in her path.

Perhaps, in the mind of Lady Eloisa, there

might be at times a sickly misgiving as to the future; but she took courage from the unfeigned openness of Mary's character. She knew that sin could not thus ape honesty. And so she lulled herself; and averted her thoughts from what, even in idea, seemed to curdle and impede the very flow of her life-blood.

Oh! what cowardice is it thus to turn from the shadow of evil, which, fairly faced, might be dispersed. Would the plague—the pestilence—be suffered to creep on, and no voice of alarm be raised? Is sin less insidious—less fatal in its encroachments? A single word said in friendly warning—not in angry remonstrance—nothing called for that—would have opened the eyes of one, whose perceptions of evil and of its semblances were too obscured, by the distorted medium through which such things are viewed in the style of society in which she had lived, to see, that the easy familiarity which an attractive youug woman might observe towards a married man, could endanger at once his own and his

wife's tranquillity. A great many shipwrecks are made under the flag of "innocent intentions," which an avoidance of the least appearance of evil might have spared.

Lady Eloisa did not actually see evil in the friendly intimacy between Miss D'Arc and her husband. A respect for both forbade any misconstruction. And, with a painful sense of possible trouble, there was a happy feeling of security in the ingenuous character of Mary. The word of warning was left unsaid. A mother can say—"you are too indulgent to my child; you spoil it; you will make it wayward; or you will make it love you more than it does me." There is a pride in wifehood which forbids such remonstrance. Alas! how many slender punctilios are suffered to render more difficult the many difficulties of life.

The day following brought the same course of tranquil amusement, with its evening ending as before, in the merry romp with the children—the tea table—the pleasant music, and soft

loungings in easy chairs before a blazing fire; thus offering a general likeness to English country evenings, and a strong contrast to the mode in which every other nation passes those same hours, where means and position afford a choice.

The next evening was to be one of representation.

Lord and Lady Maldyn, with their Christmas party, two families from Deirham, and the Curate, were to dine at High Down. About the invitation of the latter, there had been a little discussion. Captain Essenden suggesting, that, although he loved Leigh as a brother, he thought he was no addition to the party; while he himself would be gladly exempted. Lady Eloisa, on the contrary, urged that it was incumbent on them, as friends of the Curate, to further his meeting with the Maldyns; who esteemed him highly, and whose Church patronage rendered them desirable acquaintances to all unbeneficed clergymen. Captain Essenden was convinced,

and Mr. Leigh invited; much to Mary's satisfaction.

There had been an interruption to the kindly feelings, with which it was Mary's desire to regard the Curate, that required repair. At first, the sudden transition from a show of sensibility and indulgence to the sternest disapprobation, as evinced at their last meeting, had been regretted by her with forbearance and discomfort. But pride, that Marplot where gentleness was so much more desirable, had interfered; and told her that no one had the right of showing, as she imagined he had done, such decided resentment at an evasion on her part of duties, about which, after all, there might be a difference of opinion. Indignation had then succeeded. But all such feelings were fast merging into the wish of again meeting and conciliating one, who, in the most austere word, betrayed an interest of more weight with her than the blandest indulgence of others.

The diamond drop sparkled on her fair open

brow, the corresponding *agrafe* was placed in the rich folds of green velvet which graced her beautiful bosom and shoulders, and Mary D'Arc turned from the mirror, which reflected her carefully adorned loveliness, with a satisfaction only referring to one of the party she was preparing to meet.

A woman's estimate of the potency of skilfully chosen ornament, is often thus fallacious. They are taught, truly, that such may secure the suffrages of taste and fashion; but know not how abortive an instrument it must prove in awakening dormant feelings in those, whose habits of thought render them insensible to its attraction; how superfluous where the sensibilities have already been called forth!

Mary, with the old habits of a life of display, looked on all the costly gear, selected for her adornment, as accessary to the impression she wished to make. How little she knew that he, for whom the bauble glittered on her brow, heeded it not, saw it not; yet, looking on that

air front as the telegraph of all he wished to earn, had studied it with an intensity dangerous to his peace, and conducive to the thraldom he had so unwittingly incurred. How little she guessed that the diamonds sparkling on her breast were unnoticed; and, if thought of, would have been considered, perhaps, as resembling those beacon-lights, which speak of hidden rocks and stormy waters; perhaps not less dangerous to man's welfare than the deep sensibilities—the slumbering passions which he believed lay in the heart beating beneath. Mary knew nothing of this.—Dreamt not, that, while looking at her whole being as the very perfection of creation, this analyzing Curate had conceived that he had there detected the flaw which spoke it all of earth.

It is an error peculiar to men of a certain temperament, and most usual with those called to the ministry, and therefore untutored in the world's anomalous wanderings and conventional licentiousness, to see in every semblance of evil,

the sin itself. The card-player, with them is the gambler; the wit, the scorner; the waverer, the infidel; the *bon vivant*, the drunkard; and, by the same analogy, in the coquette who, in folly deals forth her prettinesses, they see the evil woman spreading nets meant for destruction. Mr. Leigh, though not exactly sharing in the sweeping judgments of those who thus jump at anathematizing conclusions, and see no intermediate grade between the vicious who "scorn to mince damnation, or work the works of darkness in a cloud," and the timid perpetrators of the *pêchés mignons* of society, was yet too little acquainted with the various phases permitted to women in the world, from the tiny crescent of familiar talk to the broad full moon of general levity, to feel quite sure in which to class Miss D'Arc. His opinion had hitherto been, that such freedom of manner—such perfect ease and indifference of address towards men, as towards women—so different to the shrinking embarrassment and timid reserve of the country young

ladies, from whose example he could alone form his notion, was the result of hacknied contact with the world—a continued liberty of action, essentially opposed to his ideas of the rightful position of woman in this life, if not militating against her accession to another. His theory was just, as far as it went; and theories never should go further than the circle of one's own experience. A world of laborious argument and assumptions would thus be spared. And the Curate of Deirham might so have found out, that, in spite of the false and vicious system as regards single girls in English society, the inborn purity of a woman may pass unscathed amidst the burning ploughshares of dissipation and permitted levity.

There are those who look on women as the roses of this world; and to such the early dew-drop, which rests in their fresh and fragant bosom, lends a charm, which the faded and unclosed flower, that has flourished under a midday sun, loses. Leigh did not look on women as roses:

and he repugned the condition, in which, seen through the medium of classical studies, half the world are disposed to place them. He considered them rather as the gentler, holier, dispassionate shadow of the man; whose strength was in their weakness, whose power was in their tenderness. He allowed them equal weight and reason with the first created; though, with something of Hebrew and Eastern associations, he rather limited the circle of their influence.

There was that, in the manner of Miss D'Arc to himself, which realized to the full these notions. It was marked by gentleness, diffidence, and consideration. There was at times, it is true, a trepidation which startled him. It was so different to the usual tenor of her manners, of which calmness was the distinctive feature. Was there any evil to be concealed? The open, unshrinking look of those soft, loving eyes, forbade the idea; besides, the exception to her usual ease seemed rather

the result of sensibility than apprehension.

Towards the other bachelors of the neighbourhood, there was a *nonchalance* approaching nearer that given by the settled fortunes of a married woman, than the little degree of excitement which habit accustoms one to see, as a matter of course, in the association of disengaged men and women. In fact, there was something of a repellant character in her bearing—something almost morose, to those whose means and position gave them usually all that suffrage which "good matches" bear off in the company of unmarried women. And yet there was a peculiarity even in her most reserved bearing; telling more of a sense of the plentitude of power unused, than scrupulous timidity. There was also some little coquetry, shown as much by the indifference with which attentions were received and played with, as by the art which attracted them.

Yes—it was coquetry; and the Curate's

straitlaced notions deplored it. And yet, after an examination into detail, there was little to find fault with.

To the elder married men, she was the attentive woman, obliged by their notice, and pleased and playful in her perception of it. To Admiral Calthorpe, she was the petted girl, full of pretty flirtings and caprice; which no one, not even the stern Leigh, could wish less; and which, to the Admiral's vain old heart, lent a warmth and happiness not often bestowed in this apathetic world, where old men and old men's vanities are concerned.

To young married men in general, but more particularly to Captain Essenden, the Curate had remarked that the manners of Mary were a mixture of kind-heartedness and fascinating vivacity; exacting attentions with the tyranny of a *petite maitresse*, yet receiving them with the ingenuous good-humour of a sister. She showed an interest in all that concerned him, but so openly, and of so comprehensive a

nature, that none could say that Lady Eloisa was not the paramount object. And yet, with all this, she would withdraw herself to *tête-à-têtes;* which, if not dangerous to him who shared them, were at least inimical to her character for discretion. It was at such moments, or at the description of such, reported to him, that the brow of the Curate became stern with displeasure. The levity which could lead a woman so to disregard appearances was hateful to him; and he marvelled at the license which custom thus could tolerate. Yet, even here it might have been difficult for him to have pointed out an instance where the conduct of Miss D'Arc was a decided infringement of the laws imposed on maiden-discretion. He judged it rather by the effects produced, and he judged it harshly; having seen, with the acutest alarm, how deeply the feelings of his friend Essenden were stirred. And, as men rarely fail to do in all such cases, he attributed blame, even while he forbore to impute to her

any participation in them. But there was a blindness in all this, either real or feigned. She did not see, or she would not see, the extent of her power over Hubert Essenden. How reconcile this blindness with her perfect acuteness and sensitiveness in all other circumstances! It was irreconciliable; and wilful sin was brought against her by a heart which would have bled to have established her acquittal.

In acting for an especial purpose, Mary had certainly lost sight of the correct instinct which had in most cases guided her steps. Wounded to the quick by the ascription of unworthy and interested motives—an odium which she fancied might have found its foundation in the too facile tone of her usual manner—she had suffered the idle talk of coarse-minded men to influence her conduct; and in expressly avoiding, receiving, or attracting, the attentions of the single, she had unwittingly made more prominent those of the only married man with whom she was associated.

A life of the idlest, most aimless, yet most active dissipation had shut her eyes to the existence of the passions, which may lurk beneath the merry trifling and amusements of society. Habitual thoughtlessness, or rather the want of observation—we must not call it innocence—still kept her in ignorance; and, like the child who plays with lighted straws, she paused not to consider whether aught inflammable might come within the scope of the lightsome and endearing tone of her manners. It was an indifference to consequences, and the nature of her own influence, which no woman should permit to herself after the age of eighteen; and one of the many evils resulting from that false system which throws a young woman into a mixed society, there to imbibe with its recklessness the very semblance of licentiousness, even while the heart may have escaped the vitiation.

The Curate doubted that escape. And yet, even with all the sinking of spirit, which the

existence of evil in the fair works of creation excites in the mind of those who are set on the earth as fortresses, from which the warfare against sin should issue, he looked with fond and anxious thoughts on one who bore the still perceptible stamp of original uprightness.

And these two now met. The one loving, but wrestling with this subtle influence, with that giant force, which, borrowed from a source designed to bring all things to subjection, could have torn a throbbing heart from his bosom, rather than resign it to the wild affection, which he even then surmised, was experienced by another, despite the most sacred reasons whch should have combined to stifle it; and, what was still more hideous to his fancy, known and encouraged by her, to whom such feelings should have been as the noisome blast of pestilence.

She too was loving: but not, as he believed, with a sin-led heart; but, loving, fearing, and

doubting with all that deep humility which marks true love in woman, and is so strictly part and parcel in all her natural relations to man, however much the progress of society, or rather the retarding of civilization, may disguise it. Yes! ye Corinnas, ye Aspasias, ye Daciers, De Staëls—ye wise women of every age and country! ye cannot deny that the perfect love of the female depends on a sense of the man's superiority. It began with creation—it will cease but with the end of all things. And woman's true happiness in love is only found when she looks up with a fond deference, and glories in the truth that man—the protoplast—God's man—is her "lord and master!"

And these two met loving. His eyes rested on the fair expanse of her white forehead; the dark arch of pencilled eye-brow, the drooping lid and its jetty fringe; and she thought the pelucid gem which glistened on her front attracted his gaze. Her ears drank up the deep tones of his low, harmonious voice; and

he believed her listening to Admiral Calthorpe's account of a chess problem.

This was but an infinitesimal portion of the misconception existing between them. It is a strange existence, where the ideal can thus separate the material. Volumes could be written on the mysterious power, which, in the form of suspicion, fear, hasty judgement, pride, timidity, or a million of other such protean shadows, can interpose between two creatures, as surely as time or distance. Volumes could not explain the matter, but simply state that so it is.

As Mary had anticipated from some hints dropped in the morning, Lady Eloisa, when marshalling her guests to proceed to the dinner-room, consigned her to the arm of Sir William Aviston.

True to the night-mare fear, which the Brighton gossip had impressed upon her nerves, Mary's only thought was, how to prove, by her indifference to the grave and wealthy dip-

lomatist, that she, though portionless, and *passée*, as the world's unmerciful jargon had pronounced her, was guiltless of every matrimonial design on his account. The opportunity for this presented itself sooner than she expected.

On being led to the top of the table, opposite to the place already taken by Lord Maldyn, at the right hand of Lady Eloisa whom he had conducted to the dinner-room, Mary discovered that room had been left but for one.

It was a moment of ceremonial difficulty. For the plenipotentiary, the Knight, the Privy Councillor, to merge into the ranks among country gentlemen and parsons, was forbidden by every law which had ever treated upon etiquette. To resign the young lady's companionship, was as much against the Chesterfieldian troth of the sad-looking Knight. There was one short interval of embarrassment. Mary dispelled it. With a few graceful and

courteous words to Sir William, she withdrew from his side, and glided with quiet ease to the bottom of the table; where, taking a chair placed to the left of Captain Essenden for some supernumerary guest, she looked smilingly up the long table, as for approbation from Lady Eloisa at her good move, with a little mocking triumph in her look at having evaded the association designed for her.

Lady Eloisa returned the smile, with a pretty nod of thankfulness at her readiness in smoothing the difficulty, which the least seeming infringement of new dignities must always present.

Sir William, too, felt pleased, in spite of the slowness with which pleasureable sensations reached his bricked-up heart, to find that a young lady, whom his sister and Lady Maldyn had persecuted him into considering as one fitting to break the tranquil tenor of his widowhood, certainly did not mean to take him by storm; a thing so opposed to all his diplomatic

notions of delay, and to his own personal opinion of the unseemly nature of demonstration of any kind.

Miss Harcourt, who was the lady, who, by inadvertence in leaving but one clear place at the top of the table, had caused the momentary hitch, was delighted that chance had done that, for the furtherance of her wish of engaging the attentions of the insensible Sir William, which her own policy could never have effected.

Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt shared in the approval of Miss D'Arc's resignation of the post, which they thought Lady Eloisa, with undue partiality, had consigned to her. Captain Essenden felt with a thrill of joy, which shot through his whole being, the folds of the green velvet dress fall softly against him; a joy which he concealed by talking in double quick time to Lady Maldyn, who was at his right hand.

And Mr. Leigh? How did an everyday movement, yielding, to those who noticed it,

only satisfaction, affect him? He saw, in the whole proceeding, the confirmation of many a bitter doubt; and, while he marvelled at the address which a familiarity with the great world bestows, where aught of manœuvring or self is concerned, he felt, with a sudden condemnation almost amounting to agony, that his darkest thoughts of the reckless levity of Miss D'Arc were too truly justified.

The dinner passed merrily on. All knew each other; and the vivacity of Lord Maldyn, the unremitting animation of his wife, the wild gaiety of Captain Essenden, caused by the intoxicating sense of happiness which had reached him, lent a character of joyfulness rather opposed to the prescriptive calm of a country dinner.

One alone sat mournful and abstracted. And Mary, in her blindness, thought that perhaps it was the part of one zealous in his calling, thus to withdraw his attention from the trifling of the many. The asperity which her own sup-

posed defalcation had occasioned, she ascribed to that quick sense of religion, of which she felt she had but partial understanding; while the cold sternness of his manner to herself she construed as the evidence of his displeasure at her failure in all proper activity in the duties he saw others undertake. In short, she attributed his perceptible disapprobation to professional feelings; and the gravity which the grieving soul of the tongue-tied teacher felt impossible to shake off, was put to the score of the personal dignity of the high priest. How often have such men to undergo similar misconstructions.

Mary sang that evening, but it was with listlessness and indifference. Lord Maldyn taxed her musical taste by exacting one or two scenas, and he was loud in praise; but her execution was all of art, not inspiration.

Captain Essenden avoided singing with her; and, though he hovered near her, he scarcely addressed her; which, together with a tremor

on his lip, and unusual paleness, made her believe him unwell.

The inexhaustible flow of Lord Maldyn's talk kept the silence of others from being noticed—indeed it imposed it; but his liveliness was dissonant to the tone of Mary's feelings; and, to her surprise, she found herself talking quietly with Sir William Aviston on the old subjects interesting to Italian tourists, with a sensation of relief.

Lady Maldyn, who was an utilitarian in the strictest sense of the word, was discussing with Mr. Harcourt and Mr. Leigh the excellence of a new system of mat-making for school children, invented by herself. To assist her description, she asked Mary to bring a crochet needle, and do a little of the stitch with some silk, which would do to represent the hemp. Another idea took possession of her versatile mind before Mary had completed her task; and, taking Mr. Harcourt to the examination of a stove in the

conservatory, which she could prove to him might be employed in forcing cucumbers, at the same time that it was soberly guarding geraniums, she left Mary and Mr. Leigh alone to discuss the mat.

It was finished, and Mary laid it before him. He took it up, examined it, but with evident absence of mind; and placed it again on the table in silence.

Mary observed the seriousness of his manner with deep regret; and, in spite of the extreme improbability that it should owe its origin in aught concerning herself, could not lose the idea, that her declining to accompany those preparing to assist in the school examination had deepened the displeasure he occasionally manifested towards her. With timidity she at length said:

"Do you think it would suit your school children?"

His eye rested gloomily on her, as he replied in the affirmative; but his mind was at the moment occupied in considering the possibility

of awakening her to a sense of the dangerous ground upon which, either in wilfulness or giddiness, her steps were fast leading her. Everything seemed to preclude even the attempt. On the score of propriety he dared not utter such a warning. He dreaded the flash of an eye, which he felt certain would speak indignation at an interference on so delicate a point. To venture on the subject under the shelter of his sacred office would be giving it weight—and therefore a dark character of guilt appalling to his very soul—a cruelty, which, even to think of, while that pure maiden brow, those calm and confiding eyes met his view—seemed profanation and barbarity.

Could he adopt the conventional impertinence of quizzing? Could he fright her from the danger and thoughtlessness of her career by sarcasm? It was impossible. His tongue was unschooled to either course. The fair creature was, then, beyond his reach, either to dissuade as the friend, to denounce as the teacher, or to

awaken by light and jesting words. The world and all its unruly laws were between them. It must be one vast insurrection, ere such can be overthrown, cobwebs and thistle-down, as they are.

The apparent apathy of his manner gave a curdle of resentment to the warm heart of Mary; and, still reverting to her first impression, she said rather reproachfully, "Is it not a little unreasonable, Mr. Leigh, to expect much usefulness from such an untaught *ne'er-do-well* as myself—and then to be angry with me?"

"Angry with you," he said, replying more to her words than their meaning, which scarcely reached his pre-occupied mind. "Angry!—I lament."

"But why lament?" she said, almost smiling at his gravity. "Teach me. Some of your wise words—your lessons—your example might make me one of your most useful parishioners,

and the rival even of that dear little Miss Stratton in goodness."

The Curate now saw the purport of her words, but they failed in softening him; and rising abruptly, said with some little asperity, "Are you not, in your turn, unreasonable, Miss D'Arc, to wish to add the semblance of goodness to all your dangerous fascinations?"

He did not wait for her answer, but withdrew to a distant part of the drawing-room.

Mary was so in the habit of taking all abstruse little speeches from gentlemen as intended compliments, weighing them only in the feather scales of flattery, that she failed in extracting any bitterness from the words, though the manner furnished abundance.

"Ah! it will never do," she thought to herself.

It was evident that he disliked her—thought her deficient in merit, and would not take the trouble to impart any hint as to obtaining it;

though at times he had given her the impression of willing her improvement.

The want of a "religious turn of mind," she conceived was the great bar to her ever being admitted to the approval of the Curate. It was so she expressed it, though she scarcely could define what a "religious turn of mind" might be. The outward showing, she believed, consisted in doing, thinking, speaking and dressing as differently to herself, as well could be imagined. To do otherwise than she did, seemed impossible. To feign it would involve a degree of artificial conduct her mind turned from; even without the additional distaste to a transformation, which seemed nothing less formidable than taking monastic vows, and tantamount to at once turning Quaker.

The notion that a "religious turn of mind" was a new and regenerate nature, waking to a better life in some distant sphere, even while tasting, by its present elevation and correction, a wiser and holier happiness than mere huma-

nity could ever devise, was far from her conceptions; as well as that little truth—that a cup was held out to every thirsting lip, which could impart all other blessings. The "religious turn of mind" was to her algebra, mathematics, mesmerism, freemasonry; in short, something obscure, unintelligible and unattainable; and, but for the weight which it might give her in the eyes of one who had crept so strangely into her consideration, scarcely desirable.

CHAPTER II.

"The circle smiled, then whisper'd, and then sneer'd;
The misses bridled, and the matrons frowned;
Some hoped things might not turn out as they fear'd;
Some would not deem such women could be found."

BYRON.

THE Twelfth Night ball, which to the young ladies of the neighbourhood of Deirham was an Hegira of excitement, and a period from which, and to which, all conquests and such things were to be dated, now drew nigh. Its approach was marked by the exhibition of sundry rolls of silver ribbon, and dingy wreaths, in the little bay-window of the village milliner,

perhaps their twentieth turn out; the rehearsal of waltzes and quadrilles sounding from the organist's; while the seven sash windows of the large room at the 'Crown,' showed forth signs in the form of pink cotton draperies.

Since her residence in the country, Mary had never been present at what is termed a "County Ball;" by which appellation an assembly at a roadside inn is sometimes distinguished, acquiring the title by the fact of some squire's lady and her nestlings patronizing it. This peculiar feature was not wanting to the ball at the 'Crown;' which was generally attended by most of the neighbourhood, and was duly and honourably advertised as a fashionable "County Meeting."

It was all new to Mary; even to the ten minutes passed in the cloak-room, where she waited for Lady Eloisa Essenden, who was to be her *chaperon*. Brought up to a life of representation, in which the affairs of the toilette become, as it were, second nature—the full

dress the rule, the *deshabille* the exception—it had never entered into her ideas that there could be difficulty in it; so that, when she saw the flushed cheeks, and elbows bearing the rosy tip of embarrassment, of the country young ladies, as they proceeded to unshawl themselves in the waiting room, she was at a loss to account for these symptoms.

There she sat in all the composure of perfect and well-ordered attire, with her satin and swans-down mantle drawn closely around her, the glossy braids shining with uneclipsed and undecorated lustre, no misplaced hair marring the irreproachable *coiffure;* while all around her seemed bent on, and busy in, completing the business of the dressing-room. Here was one mamma pinning up ringlets too obstinately disposed to find the centre of gravity; and, by their relaxed sinuosity, giving a pretty, chubby-faced girl the outlines of a Medusa. There was one of the attendants, who took the cloaks, neglecting her calling, while sewing on recreant

hooks which had burst from a too-tight bodice in a ten miles' drive over jolting roads; here were gloves being mended, which, having lain long in their unprofaned purity—like Tybalt rotting in his shroud—now betook themselves to open in every seam; there were sandals being replaced: in short, it was incredible what extensive reparations some very rustic members of this "County Meeting" required. But, if the cloak-room offered such samples of the *dégats* attending a country ball, it may be conceived that the homes were not without them.

On such occasions might be seen girls, with pre-occupied and anxious looks, dining in caps, because some potential tress was *en papillote*. Young men at table in shooting jackets, that the evening dress might be freshly assumed just before starting. The pastry heavy, because the housekeeper had been assisting the lady's-maid in quilling ribbon, or some such mystical feat. The footman absent, because one of the young ladies had sent him in the tax-cart to the town;

there to await the carrier, who had failed to bring the ball dress from London the preceding day.

And then, when the actual hour of dressing arrived! The darting about with chamber candlesticks, which sparkled in the dark passages and staircases like lamps in a tin mine! The smell of hair curling and perfumed oils issuing from the heir-apparent's dressing-room, accompanied with the tittering of housemaids employed for the nonce as *coiffeurs!* The vast amount of agony going on in the young ladies' rooms, where *cartons* just arrived failed to contain the sash to be worn with the dress—the wreath to match the trimmings—or, worse than all, failed altogether! Then the neglected tea-table of the poor papa below!—the doors left open—the fire let out!—a buzz—a rush all over the house, only to cease when shawled and agitated girls come in to wish "good night," after having, to his knowledge, kept his horses

waiting half an hour at the door, after they had been ordered round!

Yet even with all this, what girl, brought up in the country and since transplanted to all the dull proprieties of London visiting,—with the perfect fitness of costume ensured by long experience,—but would revert with pleasure to the recollections of all the embarrassment attending these unfrequent hours of exhibition; and delight in remembrances of the first ball, where pinching shoes, and straightening curls, mix up with the faint odour of tobacco, stealing up the sanded staircase;—the distant notes of the violin giving all its exquisite, though vague, promises of enjoyment? Who would not say that these trepidations of a country assembly were worth all the calm and apathetic serenity since experienced at Almack's? Who would exchange the dim yet fairy-like prospects connected with such "first balls," for the used up and faded realities of the belle of ten seasons!

Without one additional throb at her heart—one increased feeling of enjoyment, Mary entered the salmon-coloured ball-room of the 'Crown Inn,' the loveliest—the best dressed—the most admired in the assembly. She was happy, because she had not as yet told herself that she was otherwise; and these little confidences go a great way in giving a colouring to things. She was happy also, because she was with those who showed her affection; but she owned not one feeling in common with the young hearts which beat with excitement in the pretty bosoms around her.

She saw huge horse-hair sofas and chairs, and the pink cotton festoons at the seven windows; she saw chandeliers with glass drops, dim as the ice from a horse-pond, dropping with gutterings of badly-planted waxlights on young gentlemen's new coats. She saw exceedingly pretty girls with most exquisite nosegays and execrable *tournures*, glowing with health and

pleasure. She saw them join the dance with an indescribable sense of glory, even though the partner who led them to it might be a youth in grey trousers, with deep pink silk stockings; affording the delusion that his ancles were of the same tint and material as his cheeks. She saw all this; and she might have envied the freshness of feeling which could enjoy it. Her morning for the vague hopes of girlhood was passed; and as yet the dawn of a better day had not peeped.

Mary danced the first, second, and third quadrille with Captain Essenden. He had told her, half in mirth, half in bitterness, that he knew for certain that Sir Henry Acton was that evening to make definite proposals; urged on by his mother, and the report that Sir William Aviston, though then absent, was about to place his knighthood, embassy, and Belmont at her feet.

This was, in reality, true; and known, like all

other secrets in country places, by being confided to the keeping of some dear and confidential friend.

The scene of action had been fixed upon by the mother and son, because, according to the Dowager's idea, a letter of proposal, if refused, was such a fine show-off for a young woman; and because, according to the Baronet's notion and expressed belief, he should feel deuced sheepish to propose in an empty room, and in daylight. Neither anticipated a refusal; though the assiduities and monopoly of Captain Essenden rather retarded the declaration.

At length, Lord Maldyn asking Captain Essenden to take out Lady Maldyn to dance—she having ascertained that no one else in the room could waltz—leaving the coast clear, the proposal was made; Lady Acton herself occupying Lady Eloisa's attention, by whom Miss D'Arc was sitting, while her son told his tender tale.

Mary was so gentle and courteous in her refusal, and Sir Henry had worked himself up to such a pitch of nervous confusion, that it was not until some minutes after, that he seemed perfectly to understand the drift of her words; and even then, he felt nothing like the despair which he had been taught to believe was inseparable from that position. But when Captain Essenden, having done Lady Maldyn's bidding, returned, and took out Mary to waltz, leaving Sir Henry to communicate his failure to Lady Acton, that lady's wrath knew no bounds; and, in a furious and angry voice, she pronounced, loud enough to be heard by Lady Eloisa, that it was a pity married men should so take up young ladies' attention, and, by turning their heads with flattery and flirtation, prevent them from securing good alliances for themselves. This, Lady Eloisa, laughing, repeated to her husband, on their drive home.

At the moment he suddenly opened the

window, believing, as he said, that one of the horses had stumbled; but he agreed afterwards, though in a sleepy tone which showed his disinclination to speak more, that it was excessively malicious of the old lady.

Mrs. Gordon, who, sitting near, had heard the same remark, on Mary's return from rather a lengthened waltz and subsequent promenade with Captain Essenden, repeated it in low tones to her; and suggested at the same time, with something of hesitation, and a little twinkle of embarrassment in her kind eyes, that, perhaps, it would be better if Captain Essenden did not take up so much of one young lady's time; when doubtless there were others in the room who would have been happy to dance with him.

"I should think so." Mary answered with a little burst of merriment; adding, "Why, do you know, my dear Mrs. Gordon, there is not another man present who can waltz; and, instead

of leaving him to the patronage of the other ladies, as you would suggest, I have been far too pleased to have so agreeable a cavalier."

Mrs. Gordon did not look at all satisfied; remarking, in the same undertone, that she thought it a pity to have called forth so angry a remark from Lady Acton; observing also, that it was possible there were others present, who, having wished to have danced with her themselves, would feel as she had done, vexed by Captain Essenden's monopoly.

"Oh! there you are quite wrong, Mrs. Gordon," Mary replied in the same light-hearted spirit; "not a soul has come near me in the shape of a dancer but Mr. Tarleton. And he is so ill-tempered, I purposely evaded him; so that must not be laid to the charge of Captain Essenden. And, as for keeping off that clod of clods, Sir Henry, who would settle his wife-ing as he does his magistracy, under the instructions of his mother, it was done at

my special request and from pure kindness to me."

Mrs. Gordon only replied:

"Well, my dear Miss D'Arc, I dare say you know best;" her looks, however, belied her words.

Mary thought, however, that in this instance she did know best; an *arrière-pensée* giving satisfaction by the idea, that Mr. Leigh would learn how lightly she had valued a conquest, which a worldly mind would have so much rejoiced in. She wondered a little why Augusta Stratton looked so anxious during this discussion with Mrs. Gordon; but a move to the tea-room —where a dozen of tall tea-urns, some of which had decidedly furnished the stone-mason of the village with the form of a funereal urn, which he was fond of repeating on all the monuments committed to his genius, and were hissing in anticipatory imitation of steam-engines,— stopped all further allusion to the matter.

Lady Eloisa did not again return to the ball-

room; and Mary left at the same time with Mrs. Gordon, who undertook to set her down. Thus finished an evening which, in the annals of Deirham, was supposed to offer an example of irregular flirtation greater than had ever there taken place; while Mary, in her account of it the next morning to Lady Leverton, shewed it as the most sober little humdrum ball at which she had ever been present; adding, that but for Captain Essenden's kindness, she should have sat a wall-flower nearly the whole of the evening. So much for the different colouring and aspect, in which the things of this world may be viewed.

Mary was guilty of a little disingenuousness in her report of Sir Henry Acton's conduct. She related that he had made some sort of proposal to her; but, as she could not quite distinguish whether he was asking her to marry or to dance with him, she had thought it less embarrassing to all parties to refuse *in toto*. There was that in Mary's feelings at that time,

which would have necessitated the rejection of the offer of the most eligible of lovers in point of wealth and position; but it was a feeling she could scarcely herself analyse, much less describe: therefore she left Lady Leverton in ignorance that she had refused so unexceptionable an offer of hand and heart; a proceeding, on her part, which might have called forth questionings, and perhaps gentle disapproval. She knew that there was one wish paramount in her mother's breast, to which a sense of declining life gave additional force: it was that of seeing her daughter well and happily married. Mary had never felt less disposed to a "good match" in her life—taking the world's interpretation of the world's expression, which same expression, *soit dit en passant*, is a very odious one, applied to anything higher in the scale of being than a pair of phaeton ponies;—and therefore was more inclined to dissemble the extent of Sir Henry's aspirations.

Mary's further share of the winter festivities of

Deirham was put a stop to, by a considerable increase of indisposition on the part of Lady Leverton; which, together with a cold, snowy February, kept her almost a prisoner. Still, however, there was interest even in this dark side of country life. There was excitement in the hurried walk on the beaten paths in the few brief minutes of sunshine, which might illumine, not melt them. The river, too, looked so brightly blue, rushing between its snowy banks; and the birds seemed lured to such close fellowship with man. Troops of black-birds, thrushes and sparrows, like other bipeds, shewed that weakness, not strength, favours community.

Admiral Calthorpe and Captain Essenden were not affrighted by the inclement weather from their usual morning calls, after the gradual improvement in the Viscountess' health enabled Mary to receive them. The huge chesnut mare of the Admiral had learnt a sort of *glissade*, admirably suiting the roads she traversed;

while the more active Essenden, after one or two serious falls, by which one of his horses had got severely hurt, found the occasional walk into Deirham exactly what suited his constitution.

To have seen his radiant, glowing countenance as he approached the Arches, one might have thought so too; but Lady Eloisa, finding him pale and dispirited in the evening succeeding these long walks, conceived they produced too much fatigue. There was indeed frequently a lassitude, and a degree of low-spirits in him, which she fancied betokened indisposition. On questioning him, he owned to a want of usual health, and surmised that he wanted change. This Lady Eloisa strongly recommended, advising him to visit his father in London. And on one occasion, when Mr. Leigh was present at a discussion on the fading looks of Hubert, her counsel was so forcibly seconded by the Curate, that he agreed to follow it; arranging to go to town the succeeding week. This determination

he afterwards changed; still, however, holding to the plan, though deferring it from week to week on account of some fancied engagement.

Mrs. Gordon and Miss Stratton, by their near neighbourhood and unremitting attentions, conduced much to enliven Mary's partial hibernation; but, better than all this, Mr. Leigh was their most frequent visitor. Not the stern, abrupt, and somewhat inconsistent being she had so repeatedly found him; but gentle, subdued, perhaps cold, and yet inspiring her with an acute sense of the warmth of benevolence which marked his character.

Perhaps she became better enabled to form a judgment on this matter, by being herself less even than a secondary object of his attention. To the Viscountess all his words, his looks, his hearing were devoted. He reaped a rich harvest from the sowing; not confined to the feelings of love and reverential gratitude with which she regarded him. For, while imparting deeper instructions in the Holy Writings to her whole-

some and unsophisticated understanding, and displacing some trifling and superstitious innovations, some of the "wood, hay, and stubble," accumulated upon "the pillar and ground of the truth," he found beneath so bright a spirit of holiness, that told him as much of the glory of the Self-Existant, as could the full blaze of creation.

With ready tact, on finding that the visits of Mr. Leigh were often paid when he knew she was from home, Mary guessed that he so preferred it, and thus timed them; and, rejoicing at the singular happiness they seemed to shed over her mother's heart, she arranged that they should be rarely interrupted.

The evidence of the consequence which his society was to the Viscountess, was in itself sufficient to banish the least approach to mortified feelings, which this gentle over-looking of herself might have created; but after all, with his calm and measured notice of herself, there was so often betrayed an intense anxiety that she

should understand and appreciate much that he read or discussed with her mother, that she learnt to consider the slight attention paid to herself, was rather the tone of manner adopted towards all young females, than peculiar or personal to herself.

That Lady Leverton's views of religion had been sedulously extended by the Curate, she had every proof; but it was not so clear whether the things of a sacred nature, which were so often made the subject of the Viscountess's conversation, were the result of her own keener perception of their importance, or had in reality been suggested by Mr. Leigh as a means of stirring up more active feelings of piety within her own bosom. She inclined to the latter supposition; and though, like all those who know the rudiments of a science, she imagined herself sufficiently well acquainted with its bearings, the belief that these holy lessons emanated from the Curate gave them all the weight that her reverence for him would natu-

rally impart. There was one impediment to her calm investigation of the plan of saving mercy laid out before her.

Lady Leverton so naturally mingled the subject of death with the truths of revelation, and so identified her own beatification with the promises attending the one blessed consummation of Christian hopes, that, without intention, she brought to Mary's mind that most mournful of anticipations, a mother's death.

In the busy scenes of life through which her footsteps had strayed, so sad an image had never occurred to her; and now, though presented under a fair aspect, it ever filled her heart with so wild a grief, such overpowering bitterness, that a deluge of tears shed on her mother's bosom was the constant result. The impression of the poignant sorrow thus called up, made her intuitively avoid its recurrence; and sometimes by playfulness and merry artifice, she would arrest her mother from pursuing the mournful topic. Still, the anticipatory knell

had been rung in her soul's hearing; and Mary at length had learnt to quail at the idea, that she, who, from her first babyhood, had been the one presiding and sheltering spirit over every moment of her life—she whose every look was one warm gaze of affection—her every word the tender echo of the warmest heart,—could be irrevocably torn from her. It was a thought that brought a soberness to her soul, in which she could scarcely recognize her own identity.

CHAPTER III.

"She look'd so lovely as she sway'd
The rein with dainty finger tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips."

TENNYSON.

THE merry spring-time came. Soft airs and genial suns again restored the Viscountess to her customary state of health. She was still delicate, but not suffering; and Mary, employed among her flowers and all the busy idleness of lady-life, resumed much of the happy thoughtlessness of old habits.

She again commenced her rides with Miss Stratton, and felt grateful to the kind little heiress for those arrangements which proved so considerable a pleasure for her enjoyment.

Though kind and affectionate as usual, Mary could not omit remarking that Miss Stratton was infinitely more thoughtful than she used to be; apparently brooding over one idea to the exclusion of all other interests. "It must be for good," Mary thought, as she reflected on this new phase in her friend's character; but she forbore to question her on the matter. Lady Eloisa Essenden also observed and commented on this unusual abstraction to Mary; but like her, felt a delicacy in noticing it to one, who in spite of her extreme timidity and simplicity, owned a dignity of character, none who regarded her would risk offending by ill-timed questioning.

Owing to indisposition attending the expectation of an "interesting event," as the "Morning Post" would word the phrase, Lady Eloisa was

chiefly confined to her sofa; it was therefore in accordance with her petition, that Mary and Miss Stratton constantly made High Down the point of their rides, usually remaining there the chief part of the morning. Occasionally Admiral Calthorpe and Mr. Leigh accompanied them, or they were joined by others of their acquaintance; but it almost constantly happened that Captain Essenden had business in the direction of Deirham, and so arranged to accompany them in their homeward ride. Thus the days passed cheerfully away, so that Mary felt no want of amusement, though, since Lady Leverton's illness, she had declined leaving her in the evening.

One bright morning at the end of May, early after breakfast, Miss Stratton called to ask Mary if she were inclined to accompany her on a very long expedition, to see a beautiful new church and parsonage at some distance from Deirham, built with all the then-dawning

architectural coquetting with mediæval peculiarities. Miss Stratton had met the incumbent of Udale, as well as the architect, the evening before at Mr. Harcourt's, who had proposed the ride; engaging these two gentlemen, as well as Mr. Leigh, who had also dined at the rectory, to be of the party.

Mary gladly promised to join them, and the cavalcade soon set off. It had been arranged that they should call for Mr. Leigh at the Gravel-pits; which, by swerving a little to the right, was not much out of the direction their way led them.

There was a breezy freshness on the high ground to which they had ascended, that seemed to give added life and animation to the party; while the horses, bounding along, appeared to partake of the pleasureable feelings of those they bore. On leaving the Gravel-pits, they had resumed the direct road to Udale, which now led them near High Down, though on considerable

higher ground; so much so that they looked down upon the whole of the little domain of Captain Essenden.

While admiring the pretty panorama of home scenery which lay before them, Mary discerned Captain Essenden pacing slowly, and even at that distance, it appeared gloomily, on the lawn. She pointed him out to Mr. Leigh, who was by her side, the rest of the party having proceeded on their way; and then, as if moved by a sudden idea, added:

"Mr. Leigh, will you do me a great kindness?"

"Certainly," he replied; wondering at the hasty question, but looking immeasurably pleased at the notion of being useful to her.

"That lane," she said with quickness, "leads to the stable-yard and out-buildings of High Down. It would take us there in less than five minutes. We might then ask poor Captain Essenden to join us, who I am sure is quite miserable because we are not already there this

morning. We could all come up by the church, and rejoin Miss Stratton on the Down, before they pass the turnpike. Ah, do not say no," she added laughingly, seeing that the Curate made a faint effort to object. Telling the groom, who was behind them, to go forward and ask Miss Stratton not to ride very fast, as she and Mr. Leigh were going to ask Captain Essenden to join their party, and would meet them at the turnpike, she turned her horse quickly into the lane, saying, " Pray, pray Mr. Leigh, come with me. You cannot think of leaving me to go alone."

That the Curate could not think of leaving her to go alone was most true; but he followed her with many contending feelings warring beneath the calm exterior he forced himself to wear; one being at the moment most painfully pre-eminent. It was indignation at what he conceived unparalleled lenity and indiscretion on the part of one, from whom in the calm and holy visits in which he had of late en-

countered her, he had learnt to hope better things.

Should he remonstrate with her? The opportunity seemed fitting. Yet what was it that he was meditating? Reproaching, finding fault, accusing of, or at least attributing impropriety to one who, whatever the interest she maintained in his breast, was one to whom he owned no affinity beyond the simple tie of acquaintanceship. It was not a simple girl either, to whom he might have hazarded a word of friendly warning, but a woman of the world, whose age nearly equalled his own; and one who, by a certain high bearing, shewed much of self-respect, however greatly her estimation of discretion might differ from that of others. The whole tenor of her education too stood up for her defence; based, as it was, on self-indulgence, continued amongst the frivolous, and scorners of the straight and defined laws of morality. Did she see, as others saw? Was it for him, then, to snatch the film of worldliness from her eyes,

and shew her to herself as one trampling on the cast-off veil of maiden reserve—as the reckless Circe, leading to the darkest point of criminal fascination, one who, wittingly or unwittingly, had already made many steps towards the encompassing of his soul's ruin? The question had been often asked, the answer had been as often evaded. There had been something within his own heart, which, giving him too acute an interest in all this, too deep an agony in suspicion, bade him doubt the purity of the motives which led him to interference, and question whether personal feelings might not have lent a deeper dye, to what in others would have passed as permitted light-heartedness, even though the effects on a vagrant sensibility had been as potent. In fact, he had asked himself, with a sudden misgiving, whether jealousy for her affection, rather than zeal for her purity, had not given a colour to all his impressions concerning her. But he had struggled against all this. He had shut his eyes to her beauty; he

had questioned her most unstudied action; he had misconstrued all the deferential consideration which at times she shewed for his words, and had taught himself to consider the occasional and fascinating exhibition of interest in himself, as one golden thread in the tissue of coquetry constantly weaving by the unconscious object of his wary watchfulness.

By this unremitting schooling of his sensibilities, he had learnt to look at her as the one dangerous quicksand in his path, a cup of sweet poison held to his lips, a false jewel for which even heaven might be bartered. He had struggled against all this well and manfully; and yet now he quailed in spirit at the thought that the moment was come, when, to forbear to raise the warning voice against the evil of which he was cognizant, and therefore accessory to, would be a falsification of the most sacred oaths and ordinances.

But he resolved that he would delay no longer, though the unveiling the position in

which she stood—the probing of the sin, or of its semblance—called for a light hand, and all the tenderness and gentleness he could command.

They had reached the out-buildings of High Down; and Mary had despatched a man who was at work near with the message, that Mr. Leigh and Miss D'Arc were then waiting at the north gate, to know whether Captain Essenden would join a riding party to Udale; and still the Curate's lips were closed.

At length, and with an effort at lightness, contradicted by the paleness of his face, he said:

"I recollect, at a very early period of our acquaintance, Miss D'Arc, your asking absolution of me; and I, with the mistimed severity of a country parson, gave you an answer somewhat *maussade*." Mary smiled at the remembrance, as he continued, "If you would ask me now for absolution, I should make conditions, and exact confession. Would you accept these terms? Would you make a 'clean breast,' as

the Irish say?" He tried to be lively, as the surgeon jests to give courage to the poor sufferer whose agonies he is about to cause. "Would you confess to me?"

"Confess!" Mary said, turning to him a brow of such fair ingenuousness, eyes of such sweet smiling candour, her every secret seemed at the moment told by them. "Confess!" she again repeated; his manner, rather than his words, exciting attention. "Confess what?"

"Oh, our shriving must be conducted according to approved rules," he answered, still attempting gaiety. "I will ask questions which you must answer faithfully. Are you aware—are you—are you prepared for this?"

This was not exactly what he would have said. The words, "Are you aware of the evil construction to be placed on some of your actions?" were on his lips; but his heart smote him at the idea of the pain he was about to inflict, and he still delayed.

There was a perturbation in his manner, a

trembling in his voice, which, by one of those incomprehensible influences we know, but cannot explain, sent a thrill through the whole frame of Mary. Of what nature were the questions he would ask? There was but one probable, when she connected with his words, his agitation and earnestness; and the idea sent a warm blush into her cheek, while her eyes, for the first time averted, dropped beneath his searching glance. But a moment's reflection dispersed the image which all this had called up. She thought of the cold and collected character, as which she had been taught lately to regard Mr. Leigh; and felt that the delusion which for the instant had stolen over her, had been caused rather by the softness and tendency of her own feelings, than any change in those of reserve and austerity which usually so manifestly actuated him.

She looked up to gather a truer meaning from his words; and again her heart throbbed under the impression that the constraint which had

hitherto influenced him was about to be thrown aside, there was a look of such deep tenderness resting upon her. The blood rose to his temples, as his eyes met hers; and there was a momentary and embarrassing pause. At the moment was heard in the distance the quick galloping of Captain Essenden's horse, which, as Mary knew, was always kept saddled at that time in the day.

"Essenden has flown like lightning to your call, Miss D'Arc," the Curate said, with something of bitterness. "I imagined that he would have kept us waiting a quarter-of-an-hour, at least—or I would scarcely have touched on the subject on which I wanted to have spoken. Will you promise me the opportunity of renewing it?"

Mary bent her head in acquiescence, as the joyful and breathless Essenden rode up to them.

She quickly explained their plan of proceeding, and the three galloped off in the

direction of the turnpike, where Miss Stratton and her three cavaliers were awaiting them.

Their ride led them through a beautiful country, which all seemed fully to appreciate, except Mr. Leigh, who rode silently and abstracted amidst all their animation.

Mary had never found fault with Captain Essenden's gaiety before. Indeed it had always proved infectious, and contrasted advantageously with the prosaic character of most of her neighbours. But to-day it was too exuberant, approaching almost to feverish excitement.

In truth, there had been that in the words of Mr. Leigh, which, though probably referring only to matter of inferior consequence, had awakened a chord in her bosom, which for a time had been suffered to remain untouched. These words—but above all the recurrence to their first meeting, with the familiar sort of interest they implied,—had, in a measure, set aside all the constraint and distance of his

late manner, drawing them to each other; and in his emotion she believed she had seen the proof that he was not indifferent to the *rapprochement*. She would willingly have mused long and silently on all this; but the loquacity of Captain Essenden forbade the attractive reverie.

The church had been surveyed, the parsonage and schools had each received their meed of praise, and the party were preparing for their homeward ride, though Miss Stratton still lingered with the architect in the church, when Captain Essenden said, gaily:

"Leigh, I owe you a vast debt of gratitude for your kind thought of mixing me up in this day's pleasures. A bishopric even would be small payment for the value received; and failing that, how fervently I wish I could see you fairly in possession of such a trim suit of ecclesiastical buildings as these."

The Curate smiled faintly; too faintly, Mary thought, in consideration of the affec-

tionate warmth of his friend. She, at the same time, wondered why he had so quietly and entirely taken the merit of the thought which had included Captain Essenden in their party, seeing that it had so completely rested with herself; but she forbore to make any comment; and Miss Stratton now joining them, they remounted their horses, and the whole party galloped merrily home, Mr. Harcourt and Captain Essenden taking up their places on each side of Mary, and leading the cavalcade.

For some days after this, Mary declined riding with her friend, and remained within the limits of the garden and field, constituting the domain of Deirham Arches. Without acknowledging it to herself, there was an expectation strong in her breast that Mr. Leigh would call.

Every ring, every footstep, gave a double throb to her pulsation; but he came not. And still the vague idea that he would seek her, to pursue the subject on which he

had so slightly yet so strangely touched, kept her almost a prisoner.

Mrs. Gordon, however, calling one morning to ask her to drive with her to High Down, Lady Eloisa having expressed also in her note to Mrs. Gordon her hope that Mary would accompany her, left no pretext for continuing this home-keeping.

They found Lady Eloisa as usual on the sofa, surrounded by her pretty children, as happy as the indulgence of the one prevailing passion makes everybody. The cause for her wish of seeing Mary, was to ask her to transfer the pattern of some *point de chaînette* to the Greek cap she was about to work for her husband; telling her that she would have no interruption in her task, as she would have no music that morning, for Mr. Leigh who was staying with them, had induced Essenden to walk with him to the Gravel-pits.

"I am not at all comfortable about this," Lady Eloisa added; "for the reason that has

induced Hubert to insist on Mr. Leigh remaining with us, is owing to the typhus fever being in the house where he lodges, besides in some other cottages near; and my dread is, that they may inadvertently enter where there may be infection."

Mrs. Gordon was in all due alarm on learning this, in the same breath stating her belief that clergymen never inhaled infection from the bedsides of the sick. The information seemed to account to Mary for the failure of the visit she had expected; and she now looked rather anxiously for the return of the gentlemen before their visit might be concluded. But the pattern was drawn; and no plea for lingering offered itself, so that Mary, on Mrs. Gordon proposing having the carriage sent round, could urge no reason for delay; and they commenced their drive home, which owned this variety—that for the duration of one mile, Mrs. Gordon's imagination showed her Mr. Leigh and all the little Essendens labouring with typhus—while

the next was taken up by her proving how extremely improbable, that, with his caution, such a catastrophe should take place. The result of all was her resolving not to mention the fever at all to Augusta; though she again falsified her intentions by saying, as Mary left her, that she should insist on her not riding to Heathfield while the fever lasted.

CHAPTER IV.

"The Psalmist number'd out the years of man:
They are enough; and if thy tale be true,
Thou, who didst grudge him e'en that fleeting span,
More than enough, thou fatal Waterloo!
Millions of tongues record thee."

BYRON.

A GAY event in the revolving year for the inhabitants and the neighbourhood of Deirham was now approaching, in the form of the annual fête, with which Admiral Calthorpe celebrated each anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo.

It was arranged that Mary should take up her abode at the Lodge for a few days, and she rejoiced that Lady Leverton's improved health left no anxiety on her account to interfere with the promised pleasures. Circumstances had prevented her being present at this fête the preceding summer; but then, being but lately arrived at Deirham, she had scarcely regretted it. Now she looked forward with a variety of interests, connected with those she was to meet, to this merry "Waterloo day."

It was a time when every species of amusement was entered into but dancing. The Admiral did not dance; and there was a spirit of egotism in the otherwise kind old coxcomb's heart, which could not consent to purvey pleasures to his own exclusion. Cricket, archery, and garden-billiards formed the delights assigned to the hours of daylight; feasting proving the intermediate one between those and the evening amusements, resorted to by the merry crowd assembled that day at the

Lodge. These latter consisted of *tableaux vivants*, proverbs, music, cards, and *des petits jeux innocents*, as the French call those little coquettish traps, which children's games adopted by grown up people in reality are.

Mrs. Calthorpe seemed the very genius meant to preside over such holidays, and shewed the true tact of a mistress of revels, by knowing exactly the very moment, when by its decline in interest, one pleasure should be superseded by another. There was only one thing that, in her estimation, ruffled the smooth stream in which all things flowed. It was the absence of Lord and Lady Maldyn from Belmont; they would so have aided and abetted all the animation of the day. Sir William Aviston had long returned to Italy. However, Mrs. Calthorpe was the only one who missed these accustomed guests at the Lodge. All had been so delightful—no one could have fancied that aught had been wanting.

Nevertheless the brightest suns must set; and the late hour, more than tired spirits, began to make the young hearts assembled feel that pleasure must soon have its eclipse, when a game of forfeits was proposed, as a sort of re-union after the dispersion which the supper had occasioned.

All assented to the proposition, and joined eagerly in the play; and soon the failure of wit, ingenuity, or courage in the trials to which all were exposed, had brought a shower of jewellery and trinkets, as pledges, into Mrs. Calthorpe's lap, only to be redeemed by the performance of tasks still more perplexing.

Already extempore verses had been adjudged as the price of ransom, and paid. Truth had been obliged to be told to every person present; and the task inflicted had been performed. A compliment had then gone the round. The knight of the lighted candle had been transacted without a smile, and still Mr. Regulus Tarleton, who was the Minos of the Law of Forfeits, seemed

inexhaustible in the variety of the penalties imposed. Besides the diversity of the tests which he ordained, there was so much method and appropriate character in them, and each seemed so exactly fitted to the person who was to undergo them, that a little suspicion might arise, that the fillet which bound his eyes did not quite intercept their vision. Be this as it may, no one inquired into this new system of *clairvoyance*. Each performed the penance assigned with a good will which proved their faith; and enthralled by the game, received the redeemed property with a triumph and rejoicing, which seemed to betray that they had really believed it in jeopardy.

At length an antique bracelet of cameos was drawn from the Treasury of Confiscation: all knew it as belonging to Miss D'Arc.

"What is to be done by the person who owns this pretty thing?" was the regulation question asked; and all waited with mute interest for the sentence.

The oracle spoke:—

"They are to fancy themselves in a sinking boat with Captain and Lady Eloisa Essenden, with the power of saving themselves and one other; and they are to declare in an audible voice which that one should be."

All the smiling circle of young ladies who sat around, seemed for an instant to hold their breath, as the judgment was declared; while the men, who lolled about on the sofas near, or leant against consoles and chiffoniers, seemed to partake of the paralyzation of the minute. Even the notable Crier appeared struck with the ransom named, as she proclaimed that the bracelet belonged to Miss D'Arc.

Mary, who had neither perceived, nor would have comprehended the electric shock which had thus passed so quickly through the group, but sat with clasped hands waiting the sentence with pretty earnestness and excitement—half feigned, half real—now wrung them as if in despair at her difficulties.

"Oh! it would be quite impossible to let that dear Lady Eloisa be drowned," she said

musingly, glancing around as if to ask for counsel; "all those pretty little children would so hate me. But really, if Captain Essenden looked as miserably anxious as he does at present—" and she looked up archly, as she spoke, to where he stood with folded arms in silent observance of herself, and seeming more than to share the breathless anxiety of those around—"I am sure it would be impossible to leave him alone." And again she wrung her pretty hands. At length, turning to Admiral Calthorpe, who was the appointed authority to see into the due execution of the penalties, she said with mock and playful solemnity:—

"I should save Lady Eloisa; but if Captain Essenden looked as wretched and piteous as he does at this moment, I think I should remain in the boat and be drowned with him!"

A merry burst of laughter followed these words, and the Admiral clasped the bracelet on the fair round arm held towards him. But the laughter had not been all genuine or general. Some had feigned it, to hide other emotion.

One, the mighty Minos, had laughed with fiendish malice; and there had been those who had found it impossible even to smile. These were Miss Stratton, Captain Essenden, and Mr. Leigh. The former, with a pale face, now glanced at Essenden; who with ardour in his gaze, and deep emotion struggling with his attempts at calmness, seemed only withheld by some mighty, though invisible, bond, from casting himself at the feet of Mary; who, resuming her gloves, sat smiling as if with a sense of having added to the passing merriment, though in utter unconsciousness of the tumult which her words had called up. Miss Stratton then looked towards Mr. Leigh, who, seated at some distance with Mr. Harcourt and another gentleman, was rather a spectator of the diversions going forward, than a participator. He, too, was pale, and, with looks of anxious alarm, was watching Essenden.

But the game still went on: fresh forfeits were cried, fresh penances were adjudged; fresh

applause, given in merry laughter, at the performance. At length, another confiscation of Mary's was held up: the bouquet of moss-rosebuds, the Admiral's gallantry had stolen for her from the conservatory.

Again, Mrs. Calthorpe asked: "What is the person to do, who owns this pretty thing?" Again, after a minute's hesitation, the Minos, who might well be supposed to have exhausted every variety of penalty, said—

"They are to go alone from the drawing-room window to the weeping willow by the fishing temple, where old Lord Shuldam was supposed to have drowned himself, and to bring a small branch of willow back. If it be a lady," Mr. Tarleton continued, with well-feigned unconsciousness of the fact, "seeing that St. John's Eve is now near, when ghosts are permitted to roam, she may choose a cavalier from the party, who shall follow her at the distance which a minute's difference in the starting may occasion."

The silk curtains were drawn back—the large French widow thrown open—and looking out at the bright midsummer moon, which shone in soft radiance on the smooth lawn and the flowering groves beyond, Mary stood preparing for her exit.

There was no affectation in her hesitation now; nothing feigned in the evident reluctance with which she contemplated leaving the glad circle to seek the lone spot, to which a superstitious story was attached. She was about to appeal for another judgment, when "shame, shame!" "coward!" "poltroon!" and other stigmas on her valour, were repeated laughingly around her. So she nerved herself to the task, and looked about for a cavalier. Her eyes first rested on Admiral Calthorpe; but he shook his slippered foot with such droll and eloquent action, that, remembering his gout, she told him she would excuse him. She then glanced towards Mr. Leigh. His eyes met hers with an intensity of expression that for a moment seemed

to rivet them; while a glow gradually rising to her cheek, rendered more beautiful their soft loving radiance; when, as if by a sudden effort, she turned abruptly, and saying quickly—"Captain Essenden, will you keep me from the ghost?"—glided from the window.

Essenden was springing forward to follow immediately, when he was surrounded and held by all the merry-makers, who insisted that the full minute should be counted. All eyes were directed to the *pendule*. The minute had passed; and Captain Essenden, springing from the open window, darted with the swiftness of an Indian along the gravel walk, by which Mary's white dress had been seen to flit along; the dew on the lawn having deterred her from taking the more direct path.

All crowded to the verandah. Young ladies shivering, and protesting it was a dreadful deed to perform—that nothing could have tempted them to try it; and all exclaiming that it was quite too bad of Mr. Tarleton, whose eyes were

unbound that he too might wait under that bright moon, for the completion of the sentence he had given.

Some minutes elapsed, and all now began to listen for the sound of returning footsteps, and to wonder whether Miss D'Arc would really venture as far as the lake. But all was silent, though one or two declared they were sure that they had heard a very distant shriek.

At length, emerging from the shrubberies in the distance, they beheld two figures hand in hand, and running with great rapidity. The one wore evidently the floating and snowy robe of Miss D'Arc, the other was a gentleman. But strange—as they approached nearer, a third figure was perceived immediately behind them. "Oh! it is old Lord Shuldham's ghost!" some eagerly exclaimed, and others believed it. But in another minute the trio gained the verandah; and, to the surprise of every one, Mary bearing the branch of willow was led by Mr. Leigh, while Captain Essenden was following.

All were amazed, except one; and she could all along have solved the mystery of the third figure. While all had been intently watching the *pendule*, Miss Stratton had seen the Curate glide swiftly from the window. She reverenced his purpose, and kept it secret.

There was a great skirmish at this *dénouement*. Every one pronounced that the pledge was unredeemed. Mr. Leigh was denounced as a Marplot—Captain Essenden seemed prepared to denounce him as something more—while Mary, sinking breathless and panting on a sofa, seemed really to have seen the ghost.

The game of forfeits was certainly at an end; and something like an awkward pause was intervening, when Mr. Tarleton, with more tact than he usually displayed, said,

"As Miss D'Arc's nosegay has not been ransomed by herself, I, as judge, pronounce it to be the property of the person who may do something which will still amuse this goodly company."

There was another pause. When, as if by a mighty effort over sundry angry passions, Captain Essenden sprang to the piano, and commenced the following beautiful air of Mozart's:—

I.

" Quando miro quel bel ciglio nero
Pien di dolce ardor,
E che scorgo sul vermiglio labbro
Un riso incantator—
Sento allor nel sen rapito
Un incendio di desir.
Idol mio, son ferito
Deh! ristora il mio martir.

II.

" Non temer che questo fuoco spiri
Colla verde età;
Ogni tempo ed ogni loco,
Fido a te mi troverà.
Il rigor d'avversa sorte
Non potrà cangiar mia fè,
Nè spaventarmi la morte,
Se a soffrirla avrò per te."

There was a force and energy in his voice at

the beginning of the song, when speaking of the charms of her he loved, which he sang rapidly and with a kind of tender desperation that stilled into perfect silence all around him; at the bars, where entreating for pity, his voice sunk into plaintive notes of passionate supplication. Then again, he became animated where bidding her to fear no change in his love—still hastening the movement. But when, in the soft Italian, he breathed forth his contempt of death, if suffered for her, there was an expression of shuddering, yet resolved, horror, in the way he repeated the words *la morte! la morte!* that impressed each one present with a feeling of pain.

Mary was the only one whose eyes were not fixed with fascinated attention on the inspired singer. She had sat from the first notes with her face resting in the right hand, the arm of which was supported by the other, held horizontally across her bosom. It may be that she was affrighted or fatigued by her expedition to the

lake; but she did not once lift her face during the whole song: and though, possibly, the only one of those attending to it who did not in a measure surmise that the words were addressed to herself, not one note—one syllable escaped her. When the concluding words *la morte per te!* were whispered forth, a convulsive sob swelled her bosom; and in the new light which had burst over her heart, it seemed a solace—an actual want—to die for him, whom this light had revealed to her.

All was clamorous praise, as Captain Essenden concluded singing. Mary lifted her face, and Leigh saw two large tear-drops resting on the pale cheeks. He stayed not to see more; but, hastily approaching his friend, said resolutely:

"Come, Essenden, your phaeton has been waiting some time;" and, taking his arm and leading him to make his parting bow to Mrs. Calthorpe, he passed with him to the hall before

he had time or presence of mind to remonstrate.

Poor Mary! Those tear-drops, which—

"Shed like the dew of the love-breathing night,
From the warmth of the sun that hath set,"

were the first which had fallen from a heart, to whom the whole secret of its love had been unveiled. But they were now quickly dried; and, mixing with the little bustle which a general leave-taking occasioned, she proceeded with some of the young ladies to the dressing-room, where their morning bonnets and archery scarfs had been deposited. Some of the incidents of the evening were laughingly discussed, while preparing for their homeward drive. Two or three girls, with all the verbosity with which shy people indemnify themselves for the silence that mixed company imposes, were eloquent in blaming Mr. Leigh's most extraordinary infringement of the rules of forfeits. And as for his shocking crossness to poor Captain Essen-

den, it was dreadful. He was certainly jealous of him. And this was said with oracular urbanity and that kind of flattering raillery, with which plain young ladies sometimes think it worth while to ingratiate themselves with handsome ones. They had never seen a man start so, or look so spiteful as Mr. Leigh did, when Miss D'Arc said she should like to be drowned with Captain Essenden. Any one could see that he was horridly jealous.

Jealous! Yes, that was the phrase used; and how it rang in the ears of Mary during the soft moonlight hours of that warm June night. Jealous! What a mass of elucidation was offered by that word. Inconsistency, asperity, sternness, neglect, in the new light thrown upon them, now stood all explained, as, one by one, circumstances were called to her remembrance. And with this explanation—these proofs of the existence of jealousy—how brightly flashed upon her heart the assurance that nothing but love had called it up. Even

the well-known lines of Racine occurred to her as corroboration:

"Je me comptais trop tôt au rang des malheureux;
Si Titus est jaloux—Titus est amoureux."

"He does love me," she almost audibly breathed forth; and as by degrees, the hope, the belief, the certainty took possession of her mind, it sent a warm flood of tenderness through her whole being.

It is a strange crisis in the existence of a woman, when the love that in a measure has lain dormant is thus called forth by the imagined discovery of the passion of another. To the boldest of men, there must ever be some feeling of trepidation and embarrassment, mixing with the first declaration of even the most ardent and truthful affection. This, of course, is imparted to her who listens, however deep may be the sympathy; and blushes arise, and eyes are cast down, and lips tremble, and the fear is felt that too much, or too little may

be said, something too kind or too cold, so that the very spring which the heart then makes into a new and blissful existence is cramped by uncertainty and a reference to rules of conventional propriety. Embarrassment thus tempers the perfection of happiness, and checks for a time the very tenderness that has called forth the emotion. But to Mary, like the Psyche of the fable, had arrived the privilege of unveiling her own love. Not that all this had been done by the simple remarks of the bow-and-arrow girl. No. At the moment when overtaken in the shrubbery, when an encircling arm bore her swiftly along, when the willow branch was torn for her from the tree, when she was again, as it were, held to the beating bosom and urged to the quick return, when, while approaching the verandah, that support was withdrawn,—did she not feel that the whole was the result of the one look which had passed between them at that instant when she wished,

yet feared, to ask his escort; and was not that look—love?

There was but one cloud in the fair horizon which seemed now to open to Mary; but that might soon be dispelled. Mr. Leigh was still unaware of the train which had been fired by the gossip of the young lady archeresses, and still must remain ignorant that the evil eye of jealousy had been ascribed to him. But now that she held the clue of this labyrinth of misunderstanding, all might be safely and easily threaded. Jealous of Captain Essenden! Oh! it would be so easy to convince him that none shared the devotion of a heart, which day by day had learnt better to know the value of its idol. The very next day might do this. He and Captain Essenden had both promised to come and assist at the rustic feast to be given to the poor around, as the second honour to Waterloo. There would surely then be some opportunity of showing to Mr. Leigh how that

mere friendliness, with the sense of freedom arising from his position as a married man, had given him the seeming preference; to which might be added the admission of little flirting habits which meant nothing, and were so construed by people of the world. The rising sun shone on the smile, which, even while sinking to sleep, these last ideas drew to her lips, as at length the long vigil, caused by a sense of new felicity, ended. That sleep ought to be happy which is decked by the smiles of anticipation for the morrow.

And how had he, on whom all this thought-worship had turned, passed the sweeet hours of that summer night? He, whose idea, by the mystical workings connected with the affinities in human nature, had intermingled itself in the hidden current of her spirit, never again to be dislodged from thence.

Alas! for the pen which should attempt to paint all the fearful excess of passion which was betrayed to the grieving Leigh by the mad-

dened Essenden, during their homeward drive that night. Passion which dared, like the volcano, to throw up its earth-formed fire—its lurid ebullitions—beneath a heaven, whose silver radiance seemed to smile with the scorn of ineffable purity on the impotency of man or earth to mar its glories.

The pale moon that night saw the direst wrestlings of wrath, love, despair, and principle. A father's fondness, a husband's tenderness, a vain man's passion, a life's friendship, contending in one poor human frame. The struggle, though begun with it, finished not with the drive, which owed its safe termination more to the instinct of the horses—who foaming, trembling with the lengthened gallop, drew up to the portico of High Down—than to the wrathful hand which guided them.

In the distant library, when all besides of that peaceful household were in the deep slumbers of the advanced night, still went on the bitter invective, the fierce contention, which the

Curate's opposition called forth from Essenden; and still might be heard, opposed to the desperate resolve, the denunciations of religion.

To the frantic assertions of Essenden that she, who had so possessed that poor, agonized heart, looked for the sacrifice of all for her sake, Leigh argued with stern foreboding the utter—the hopeless misery of the two, on the first dispersing of the mists of passion. To the sophism that an estranged heart ought not to carry on the treachery of feigned affection to one—he called her the angel Eloisa—who deserved so much better from the husband of her love, was held forth the spectacle of the fragile nature of human passion—human life; and the truth was proclaimed, that the sacrifice of stemming evil feelings became in the end no sacrifice;—and the authorized curse was spoken against the wilful infringement of God's laws. And now came the climax of the strife. To the pleadings of the friend, that he would wrest the misguided love from his heart, to

the minister's threatenings of present woe, and his dark prophecy of eternal destruction, Essenden returned the frenzied declaration, that it was a rival passion which prompted them.

The idea once expressed, seemed to gain additional force with every word. Everything was ascribed to jealousy. The meddling of that evening was imputed to the sight of her unequivocal love for himself; the opposition and displeasure now manifested to the fear of losing her.

It were vain to repeat all the fiery resolves, the frantic recriminations yelled forth by the unhappy victim of his own vanity and a thoughtless woman's indiscretion. That vanity, and her blind levity had called up a passion, wild in its nature, and criminal in its purpose; to the quelling of which the giant-force of religion, the persuasions of reason, and the misgivings of a better nature were almost ineffectual. The summer sun rose on this storm, as yet unspent. But the Curate, pale, exhausted, horror-

stricken, had stemmed its power. He was like some tall pharos, withstanding the blast and the billow; which, though weather-beaten and tempest-strained, still had its beacon-light shining clear, guiding the poor storm-tossed wreck to smoother seas. Perfect abnegation of his bewildering errors, had been beyond the power of the Curate to obtain; but the listening and obedience to the voice of religion, and therefore of reason, he did effect; and the two parted still friends, even after all this passion-stirring scene.

Solemn and binding promises had been exacted on either side, and on either side had been given. The near approach to the sanctity of an oath, in that which the Curate had made, was the only misgiving which his own share in all that had passed had left in his mind.

Speaking of the union of souls, a German writer considers it by no means an affair of quick growth; and conceives "that, even when an invisible infinite arm, as it were, presses us

suddenly upon a new heart, we must still have long intimately known this heart among the holy pictures of our longing, and have often taken down the picture, and often uncovered it, and worshipped."

Mary was ignorant of all German reasoning on that unfathomable depth, the human heart; but the above idea would have explained the anomaly, that, even while musing on the fact of the emotions in her bosom so suddenly springing into maturity, she felt the root had long been there.

What a morning of excitement was this rustic Waterloo day!—forbidding almost any recurrence to inward feelings, saving and except the resolution of convincing the Curate, that, far from any flirtation existing between herself and Captain Essenden, their league and good understanding was maintained as much by her affection for Lady Eloisa, as by any other cause. It is a strange feature in the sort of conscience, which a long familiarity with the world's holi-

day-making engenders, that the supposition of a flirtation, as it is called, was by no means an offence to the dignity of Mary; while it was as remarkable a proof of the superficial way in which human nature is known, by those who, naturally pure of heart, have only studied it in ball-rooms and its *fête* day clothes, that the idea of a deeper feeling being ascribed to her never for a single instant entered her mind.

The morning was passed in presiding at tables loaded with good cheer, around which the happy peasantry crowded with smiling faces and merry chat, contrasting rather strongly with the grim affair they were celebrating.

Mrs. Calthorpe had asked some of her friends to join them, and many were passing to and fro during the day; but neither of the two gentlemen from High Down made their appearance. There are few things more grating to a woman's nerves than the *aspettar non venire* of the Italian proverb. At five o'clock Mary could bear it no longer, and retired to her room with that

weariness of spirit, which is so sad an antithesis to pleasureable excitement. She had scarcely taken off her bonnet, and was sinking listless and dispirited on the sofa, when the bell of the hall-door sounded through the house. She started up, listening for further signs. The bell ringing to the stables, as was customary when any one was required to hold horses, was next sounded; and then she heard the noise of horses' feet along the gravel drive. It must be Captain Essenden and his friend. The moment so ardently desired was then arrived; still, Mary delayed some minutes ere she descended.

Though she had mentally rehearsed all that was to take place, that, which at the distance appeared so easy of execution, on its immediate approach was not so facile. She had to show preference to one, who it was possible might be retiring and reserved as heretofore; forgetting how, having acted from impulse at that beautiful midnight hour, he had watched over her with unmistakeable tenderness. She had to repulse

one, whose attentions and warm-heartedness had been ever met with corresponding cordiality. It was a thing of difficulty; but she would not think it so. Captain Essenden had ever shown so much tact, he would soon discover her wishes; and she glided quickly down stairs to escape the embarrassment of further thought.

She had left Mrs. Calthorpe in the drawing-room with some of her friends, still looking from the window at the animated scene on the lawn. Mary now proceeded there. On entering the room she perceived Mr. Leigh in conversation with the Admiral, whose chair and footstool were placed under the verandah close to the window. She advanced towards them, placing herself at the Admiral's side. As she returned the Curate's greeting, she wished much to see where Captain Essenden was, though she avoided looking around, as betokening anxiety, and for that reason abstained also from asking for him. The one thing that most struck her

was the pallid and disturbed look of Mr. Leigh; but she addressed some trifling remark to him, without alluding to his altered appearance.

As if occupied in framing some form of speech on other matters, he scarcely replied.

Admiral Calthorpe, taking up the flagging conversation, said:

"Did you know, Miss D'Arc, that Captain Essenden was thinking of running away from us? Mr. Leigh tells me that he has just set off for town."

It was strange that on the very point on which Mary desired to show indifference, and in spite of foregone resolves, all failed; and she now betrayed considerable surprise at the information given by the Admiral, while she felt the warm blood suffusing her face and neck. The Curate appeared not to notice her confusion, but said quickly:

"I am the bearer of a message to you from Essenden, Miss D'Arc; who, in all the hurry of

his departure would not suffer your last uttered wishes to be forgotten, or the promise he made you of seeing Lady Leverton before he paid his visit here this morning. At his request I have been his proxy, and have seen the Viscountess. I am to tell you from herself she is quite well and happy. Here is also your little book of Venetian music, which you had begged Essenden to bring."

Mary took the book mechanically without replying to the rapidly uttered speech. What could she say?

But for all that which had filled her thoughts, she would have made many comments and questions on the sudden departure of Captain Essenden; and yet she felt that the not doing so betrayed more emotion than the most close questioning could have done; and that Mr. Leigh must so consider it. The idea added still more to her embarrassment; and, with a world of mortification at things turning out so dif-

ferently to what she had wished, she felt obliged when Admiral Calthorpe, probably seeing all this, turned the conversation on other topics.

The Curate's visit was short. He mentioned his intention of calling on Lady Leverton the following day, and Mary expressed the hope of being then at home; and so they parted. That night, when the unsatisfactory nature of all that had passed was reviewed by her, the promise of that visit to the Arches was all that offered pleasure. It surely had reference to herself.

Such are the straws, grasped at by those who leave the still waters of indifference—such the vapours, pressed as balm to those wounded hearts, who have poured forth its tenderness unwittingly and unasked! When will that day come when women, loving virtue, honour, beauty, wit, and talent but in the abstract, will learn to preserve intact the precious consignment of their

devotion and affection, until sued for by a personification of some one of the qualities which has held most value in their eyes? The phantoms of an ill-regulated fancy, the spontaneous tenderness of unsought affection, have worked more sadness to the destinies of woman, than hosts of real cupids "armed in full proof."

On reaching the Arches the next day, Mary found the Curate's visit had been paid! She also received a note from Lady Eloisa, telling her, that, in consequence of excessive pain in the side, Hubert had at length decided on seeing Brodie, who wished him to try the effect of one of the German spas. And, as the period for her *accouchement* was drawing near, at which time she was always in London, she had settled to proceed there at once with her children, in order to spend the few days, intervening between his departure for the Continent, with her husband. She moreover told Mary that Mr. Leigh had promised to accompany Captain Essenden, who

was most anxious on the subject, in the event of his finding some one who would take his duties at the Gravel-pits.

The substitute was found; and Mary did not again meet Mr. Leigh until the end of September.

CHAPTER V.

"Could love part thus? Was it not well to speak,
To have spoken once?"

TENNYSON.

It was under sad circumstances that Mr. Leigh again visited the Arches.

The pulmonary delicacy under which Lady Leverton had long been suffering, assumed a new feature; and a painful cough, which nothing would allay, reduced her to a state of alarming weakness.

On learning of the Curate's return from Germany, Mary, at the Viscountess's request,

wrote to beg that he would call upon her. Though much respecting Mr. Harcourt, in the religious conversations Lady Leverton had held with Mr. Leigh, he had ever shown so much indulgence while combating some of her peculiar opinions, and in establishing purer ones, that she felt more comfort in his visits than in those of his Rector. The Curate presented himself the next day at the Arches.

The meeting was a painful one: and, as Mary's pale and saddened countenance first struck on Mr. Leigh's attention, he betrayed much emotion, holding the hand she had given him with a warmth and tenderness which, though partaking more of the sympathy of one whose sacred office it was to solace the grieving heart, even in its mute compassion, spoke comfort to her. She suffered him to retain her hand, as she told him how greatly her mother was changed; and tears fell from her heavy eyes. But she said they were a relief to her

aching heart; as she added, with a piteous smile, that she could not often cry.

Though a long absence had intervened since their last meeting, his image had been ever present to her thoughts; and the habit of this constant regard had lent a force and earnestness to her feelings, which, combined with the anxiety for her mother preying at her heart, left her without thought or will for disguise; and, as he leant over her, while, in her emotion, she had bowed her head over the hands which still held hers, neither at the moment seemed to think their meeting could be otherwise.

They proceeded together to Lady Leverton's room. She was sitting up, somewhat better; and, wrapped in shawls, seemed really to delight in the soft autumnal air which entered the open window; but, in spite of the glad animation with which she welcomed him, the Curate saw that the hand of death was on her. The conviction sent a throb of pain to his heart, as

he thought of what the bereavement would be to the loving and depending Mary.

The visits of Mr. Leigh were now strictly professional, and were looked for as a matter of course at the Arches; and, like the sun's rising, also a matter of course, they were the source of life and light to Mary.

On each succeeding visit, the manners of Mr. Leigh became more guarded; and it was impossible for Mary to detect in them aught beyond the simple feelings of compassion for the anxiety and sorrowful anticipations which she suffered, or the tender sympathy which, in his ministerial capacity, it was his part to offer; still, with the instinct of a loving spirit, she felt that there was something more than the conscientious performance of his sacred duties, in the regularity with which he visited them. She dared not analyze that something—too fearful that its fragile nature might evaporate in the examination.

He was now almost the only person she saw, for her spirits were too depressed to admit of her receiving comparative strangers; and all her intimates, like the *figuranti* of a ballet, seemed to have cleared off the stage. Mrs. Gordon and her ward were in London, the Calthorpes at Brighton, the Essendens still absent. The last letter of Lady Eloisa was written on the eve of her departure for Paris, whither she was hastening with her children, under the escort of her brother, to meet her husband. The letter was short, but she told Mary that doubtless Hubert would write the next and make amends for her deficiencies. Mary heard from others that they proceeded to Vienna, for the purpose of spending the winter there; but she never again received direct communication from either Lady Eloisa or her husband.

Mary heeded not the comparative solitude in which her days were passed. There were but two feelings paramount in her troubled bosom. The one a deep and affectionate soli-

citude for her declining mother, the other an abiding and overwhelming passion for one whose every word and look proved its strength and aliment; for one, of whom her every thought was worship. But there was sadness —deep despairing sadness in all this. And at times, when on her knees in some distant part of her mother's chamber, joining in the prayers uttered for her welfare, listening to the low music of his voice as it spoke of death and of a far distant home for the weary and earth-burthened spirit, she felt there was yet something beyond the child's grief—something deeper than the mourning for a dying mother, in the tears which gushed forth—in the sobs which shook her poor labouring bosom.

As, by degrees, an improvement in Lady Leverton's condition gave her medical attendant some expectation of her yet lingering some months longer, the Curate would endeavour to dispel the thick cloud which seemed hovering over the once vivacious spirit of poor Mary.

He occasionally succeeded; and, drawing her attention to other themes, it became a happiness to him to see her soft, kind eyes lighten up with something of their former radiance, her cheek flush, and her whole being betray a tremor of excitement and sensibility. It was a dangerous happiness, however, and one that filled his soul with doubt and difficulty.

One bright day, which, though the last of October, was warm and sunny, Mary was particularly struck with the improvement in Lady Leverton; and, unaware of the fluctuating nature of pulmonary complaints, she believed that her fading existence might still be restored. She looked forward with more than usual pleasure to the visit of Mr. Leigh, that he might see and rejoice with her at the happy change which had taken place.

He came, and he too felt hopeful that the Viscountess might yet be spared to her doting child. He remained a longer time than usual reading, though his manner was grave and

absent; and, on taking leave of Lady Leverton, he made Mary understand that he wished her to descend with him to the drawing-room. She was there still more struck with his sad demeanour. He at length told her that he should be obliged to be absent for some weeks, as business called him to London. Mary heard this with unfeigned sorrow.

"And mamma?" she said wistfully.

"Oh, she is so improved, she will do well without me. You will read to her," he added, "what I have marked for your daily studies."

"And I?" she whispered faintly, unable to continue the sentence, while the tears which she could not restrain trickled down her cheeks.

He was deeply hurt at this sudden change from cheerfulness to woe; and he took her hand as he spoke words of consolation, and endeavoured to teach her not to look for his presence for her sole amusement. His reasoning failed in its effect, while the tenderness of

his words seemed still more to move her; and at length, while sobs burst from her lips, she clung to his arm in an agony of grief. He passed his other arm around her, for she seemed scarcely able to support herself. At this she looked up earnestly in his face, but with a look of such grieving, heart-broken tenderness, that involuntarily he held her closer to his bosom. Suddenly he put her from him. The tears which had also trembled in his eyes were stayed; and, though his voice was hoarse from emotion when he bade her farewell, there was a firmness—a decision in his parting step, that forbade the idea that that parting was painful to him.

He then was gone, whose presence alone offered solace to the sad and anxious moments she had to suffer. He was gone, who alone enabled her to assume that cheerfulness, so necessary to lighten the sinking spirits of sickness. Alas! how could she hide the grief which his absence caused her—the secret feel-

ings which were consuming her? How hide from the delicate and high-minded perceptions of her mother, that her soul languished with an unsought affection?

There is this difference between happiness and misery; that in the one, we always see a higher point than that which we have already attained; while in the other, we believe that we have reached the lowest step. Mary thought that there could be no darker sorrow than that of the present hour—to lose for a whole month the society of one, for whose absence she must utter no grieving; to feel too that all this sorrow was for one, who, as time went on, proved, by a measured and consistent conduct, that he was influenced by no deeper feeling than regard and commiseration.

It is strange how little the sorrows of a woman, who loves unasked, can claim of sympathy; how seldom our compassion is asked for such, though we lend much pitying interest to all those woes connected with betrayed affection.

There is something degrading and even ridiculous in the idea of a love-sick, yet unwooed damsel; and even Lesbos fails in making Sappho respectable. While, on the other hand, the abject contrition and desolation of the Magdalen is dwelt upon with an intensity of interest, which the holy claim she has on our consideration can scarcely increase. Who cannot at once recal to their mind some pictorial representation of the penitence of Magdalen which has left its indelible impression? Who can forget the attenuated, grief-stained features, the dishevelled hair, the coarse garment, the unsandalled feet; the symbol of mortality, the skull; the symbol of her hope, the cross; the dreary wilderness which speaks of her withdrawal from human sympathy, and shows her alone with God and her remorse? It is an imagery which fills the heart with sorrow; telling, as it does, of the frailty of woman—the devastation of sin in a soul waked up to learn in the self-same minute its high destiny, and its

actual prostration. Who is there who denies their sympathy to the sorrowful record of antiquity?

But have we none for the young woman who feels, in the pangs of her passion-torn heart—in the thoughts resting, almost to mania, on one idea—in the dark, leaden, aspect which all existence offers to her tear-dimmed vision, that an evil power has come over her? Unrequited love! It is a sentence of such familiar sound, we lose the perception of all it speaks, when connected with a woman's name. We do not perceive that the Magdalen's shame, her desolation, her helplessness, hopelessness, all are there. We forget, too, the additional torture, that all this must be hidden; and social duties, personal appearance cared for—the day's light incidents talked over, smiles given to smiles, and no wandering step allowed beyond the circle's usual boundary. Oh! the dusky wilderness, the ash-strewn covering, the briar-torn feet, the passionate weeping, the low prostration, the prayer, the groan—how

much less bitter than the daily routine of home proprieties, when the heart can see no hope, nor think of peace but in extinction.

And Mary proved all this—proved it with that dead, dull sorrow, which it is to feel the one true friend fast sinking from this world. But how well she simulated contentment. It was a holy falsehood; and the dark dreary month of November passed away, and poor Lady Leverton never guessed that her child had one care, beyond that her weakness gave her; never guessed that, when kissing the sweet face which hung over her, or pressing the delicate hands which smoothed her pillow, a terrible choking emotion was sometimes called up, whch, but for flight into the solitude of her chamber, would have burst forth with the force of pent-up grief.

Are we to trace the root of all this evil? It was silently growing in the most brilliant scenes of Mary's past life; it twined around every period of her undisciplined and pleasure-seeking existence. Nature had been checked, not stifled; and

its voice would now be heard; while those dissipations, which had filled the heart with their vanities, to the exclusion of true feeling, had, by their enfeebling influence, left it more open to the devastation of passion once admitted.

As the winter drew on, the neighbourhood of Deirham began to re-assemble and to look for their winter pleasures, consisting chiefly of the delights of passing through dark roads for the sake of distant dinners, and those pleasing perturbations which the return dinners give to country ladies and gentlemen, who grow their own soups and *entrées*, and uncellar their own wine.

The return of the Calthorpes was a comfort to Mary; the gentle and cheerful manner of Mrs. Calthorpe, making many an hour for the poor invalid pass swiftly. Neither Mrs. Gordon or her ward were come back; but Mary heard occasionally from the latter. Her letters were kind; but there was a stiffness in them, too like her little formal curls and collars to own much

attraction, beyond the comfort which it always is to find oneself remembered and cared for.

Although Lord and Lady Maldyn, and many others, called frequently at the Arches, Mary saw no one but Mrs. Calthorpe and Mr. Bolton, the kind clever doctor. His were daily visits, and were watched for impatiently, Mary always accompanying him down stairs, to hear his true opinion of the Viscountess with an anxious heart. He was too aware of the declining state of the invalid to buoy her up with vain hopes; still he sought by a little divarication to divert the intense interest with which she questioned him; and by talking of other matters, and relating little local histories, force for a time her attention into other channels. Both his kindness and science made him see the necessity of this.

One morning, almost before they had entered the drawing-room, he asked with all the importance which great news gives to those who impart it:

"Well, Miss D'Arc, have you heard of the approaching marriage?"

"No," Mary answered listlessly—rather impatient at the gossip coming before the bulletin.

"Well, it is everything we all could wish," the Doctor continued; "and I now find that it has been a long attachment. Indeed, Mrs. Gordon once told my wife, that she was very sure her ward would never marry any one else."

"What, is Miss Stratton about to be married?" Mary asked with awakened interest and pleasure.

"Why, so we hear," the Doctor answered. "But as Mr. Leigh only returned last night, we have not been able quite to ascertain the truth."

"And what has Mr. Leigh to do with it?" Mary asked, with the slight trepidation that always accompanied the mention of his name.

"I thought I had mentioned that Miss Stratton was going to be married to Mr. Leigh;" the Doctor said, with his usual formality of manner. "I wish him joy with all my heart.

She is a nice young lady with a noble fortune. But I believe he deserves her thoroughly."

Mary fancied that she heard her mother's bell ring; or professed so to fancy, and wished Mr. Bolton hastily good morning. He left her, unaware of all the cruel purport of his words.

An hour had passed, and Mary was still sitting on the sofa on which she had sunk as the Doctor quitted the room. Her cold hands were clasped at her knees—her eyes fixed on vacancy, while a dreadful ringing in her ears told of the unequal circulation of her frame.

She was aroused by the entrance of the servant with the jelly, which, at that hour, she always gave to Lady Leverton. She took the tray from the servant's hand, and carried it up stairs. She placed the shawl over her mother's shoulders, as she rose on her pillow to take the jelly. In short, she did everything that was customary. And then, smoothing all, and pressing a soft kiss on the poor invalid's cheek, left her to take that repose which was

prescribed after partaking of this *nourriture*. A ring at the hall bell sounded, as, with the same automaton movements which had marked all her actions the last hour, she descended the stairs.

She had scarcely entered the drawing-room, when Mr. Leigh was announced. She received him with the calm and graceful courtesy which so peculiarly distinguished her. Her tranquillity seemed to reassure him; for he had cast an anxious look towards her at the first greeting; as if fearing something of the agitation which had marked their parting. But all was still; and her fair oval face, pale and attenuated as it was, was only more lovely in its excessive placidity. Her eyes, in which the only trace of her partial Greek origin might be found, still looked out with that dark lustre, which speaks of Eastern suns and Eastern hearts. Perhaps an increase of brightness,—a dilatation of the lids, might have been remarked, with a slight curl of haughtiness in the under lip; but her looks

were chiefly turned to some embroidery she had taken from the table near which she sat.

She answered all inquiries regarding the health of Lady Leverton, with a calmness which surprised even herself, and spoke of the absence of the pain in the chest, from which she had suffered just before Mr. Leigh had left Deirham, with a firm and untrembling voice. To the Curate there was a sharpness in its tones—an abruptness different from its usual soft *legato* expression. But Mary was insensible to any change; neither did she remark that she scarcely drew her needle through her work without breaking the slender thread. In fact, there was something in the perfect quietude—the torpid state of her feelings, incomprehensible. Had she looked to the phenomena of nature—the lull before the tempest—the quiet gloom before the earthquake—the slumbering volcano preceding an eruption—each might

have offered an explanation. However, the calm continued; and, presuming on it, she said with an affectation of gaiety:

"Poor Mr. Bolton attempts to amuse me with little village histories sometimes. Perhaps you can guess the *morceau* provided for to-day:—nothing less than your marriage."

She spoke so rapidly, the Curate either did not, or affected not to hear; and yet there was a tremour in his voice, as he asked:

"Whose marriage did you say?"

"Your own marriage with Miss Stratton," she replied quietly. Yet there was a curve of the nostril, a flash in the eye that almost spoke hatred and disgust.

The asperity of her manner, the haughty elevation of the head were not lost upon him, and seemed in their turn to calm him and give firmness to his voice, as he asked:

"Did you believe the tale?"

"Certainly," she replied. "Mr. Bolton tells

me, from the authority of Mrs. Gordon, that it is an old attachment."

Her words were low; and there was more an attempt at, than the reality of, contempt in their tone.

He looked surprised, as he said, "Did Mr. Bolton really tell you this? And what did you think?" he inquired; but he bent his head low in the examination of the lash of his riding whip, as he asked the question.

"Think!" she replied, echoing his words, with an ironical smile—"Think! Oh! the lines of Moore's song immediately occurred to me. With a little alteration they quite apply. They tell about giving a heart for song, which gold could never buy. In the new reading, the heart must be given for gold. A little mercenary, perhaps; but certainly showing more wisdom than poetical heroes generally do show."

"You are jesting, Miss D'Arc, on a serious matter;" he said gravely and sorrowfully.

"I do not jest," she replied; with a bitterness and rancour that confirmed her words.

"Then reserve your judgment but for a little while. The marriage may not take place; the mercenary sacrifice you allude to—never!"

He spoke with earnestness and emphasis, but there was no anger in his manner. On the contrary, as if awakened to some feeling by the extraordinary asperity of her last words, he looked at her with anxiety and tenderness.

Her head ached violently, and she felt a burning flush tingling on her cheeks. She had thrown her work from her; and now, with her hand clasped above her head, sat gazing wildly and inquiringly upon him. She at length slowly repeated his last words, as though asking the question—"The mercenary sacrifice, never!"

"Never," he again repeated; adding, with gentle reproof, "You should have known me better."

Alas! the calm was gone. Large tears

sprung to her eyes, and ran down her cheeks, as still she sat gazing on him. And then, as if by some strange, involuntary impulse, she sank on her knees before him, clasping his hands in an agony of grief, as she murmured—"I do know you better."

In consternation at her appalling emotion, he sought to lift her from the ground; but she resisted, still clinging to his knees, as she said, in broken and scarcely articulated sentences; "Let me remain as I am—I ought to be here—oh! Mr. Leigh, I have hated you so dreadfully—can you, will you forgive me?"

"Yes, yes, dear Mary;" he said in a voice as choked with emotion as her own; "I have nothing to forgive. You are ill—you do not see things as they are," and again he attempted to raise her. He succeeded, for she no longer resisted; but, as he stood, remained still clinging to him, with her head pressed against his bosom. He endeavoured to lead her to the sofa; but, with hands clasped on his shoulder, she still

kept her position, while she whispered in scarcely audible accents; "Do not—do not put me from you. I am so wretched—so ill."

She felt his arms close round her—she felt his warm kisses on her upturned face—she heard him murmur, "May Heaven forgive us, Mary;" and then a sound, as of rushing waters, was in her ears, her knees trembled beneath her, and a dreadful sickness was at her heart. When she again returned to consciousness, she was on the sofa; her kind nurse was bathing her temples, while the Curate, on his knees by her side, was pouring eau-de-cologne in her hands, and gently rubbing them. She smiled faintly, to show she was recovered, for she saw alarm and consternation in their looks; and in a few minutes she was able to say she was better.

Mr. Leigh then withdrew, proposing to send Mr. Bolton. The Doctor came; and, accounting for the extreme exhaustion under which Mary was labouring by her anxiety respecting Lady Leverton, prescribed restoratives and quiet.

The next morning she seemed quite recovered, though with a painful sense of weariness in all her limbs. To others there seemed an unwonted excitement and animation in her feelings, little dreaming that excitement was in truth agony.

During some waking hours in the night, she had come to a strange determination, and now prepared to execute it. She felt the step was unusual—perhaps unwise; but the idea had again and again recurred to her, that all the inconsistency of Mr. Leigh's conduct arose from his ignorance of her sentiments towards him. There was a strange mixture of simplicity and the world's hardihood in the plan—at once a contempt of all the conventional limits to female candour—an ignorance of the position in which the confession would place her. There was at once daring and innocence in the act; but it was one that alone seemed to promise peace to her craving, aching heart; and, arranging hastily to send the gardener with a note to Heathfield, she thought she would place it in a book, as

making the fact of her writing less ostensible. Her note was short.

"I have suffered much since I saw you—more than I can describe. It leads to this step. But if you love me, you will feel, as I do, there is a fearful want of understanding existing between us. Do you love me? I think—I feel that you do. I do love you. Now, nothing more must be said. If you love me, you will come again. If you do not—pray let me never see you more. Do not think it wrong or wicked, my writing this to you. Since resolving on it, I have been more composed than I can ever hope to be again, if all that dreadful story is true. But this cannot be. We shall meet again. Tell me so."

The book was packed; strict personal instructions were given to the gardener to give it into the hands of Mr. Leigh himself, and wait to see if there was anything to be sent back.

Woman's heart is one large unfailing hope.

And now Mary's bounded, when, after some hours waiting, she saw the gardener come across the field with a parcel similar to her own. She took it from his hand in the hall, hastening into solitude for its further inspection. The book and the note were the same she had sent. She rang violently, that the gardener might be questioned. His report was, that, meeting Mr. Leigh at his own gate, he had given him the parcel; and he seemed very pleased that Miss D'Arc had sent the book: but in one minute he returned, and gave it back, saying, that, as he was going to London that night, he would prefer not having it until his return, when he would call at the Arches.

Mary understood all this too well; and she bowed to the will that so decided; not in resignation, but in utter despondency. Without reading her note, she placed it in the fire, and watching it as it consumed, felt that thus her hopes were wasted. She saw not then, in the blindness which had shut from her view all just perceptions on the one sub-

ject, that her note, and its avowal, was an anomaly, which, under the most favourable issue of affairs, would stand as a cloud in the brightest love-light; and, should all prove adverse, the recollection of such having been seen by one whose heart it had failed to move, would be a sting of ever enduring shame. Where a higher reason is wanting, policy at least should teach a woman reserve in such matters.

At his next visit, Mary, with a forced composure, asked Mr. Bolton if he had heard more of Miss Stratton's intended marriage. He had; but was induced, by that intelligence, to believe the report of the marriage unfounded. Mary's throat seemed closing, as she inquired what that was. It was something too extravagant to be credited. Miss Stratton's lawyer, acting by her directions, had requested Admiral Calthorpe and Mr. Harcourt to become trustees to the large sum of £40,000, to be paid into their hands, and two other co-trustees, to be appropriated by them to the building of a church, parsonage and school-house, at the Heathfield Gravel-pits.

The surplus money to be vested in the funds as income for the incumbent.

"It is perfectly amazing," Mr. Bolton remarked. "I know that £50,000 is the extent of the fortune, to which Miss Stratton came into possession in July last. Mrs. Gordon's fortune dies with her. So, this young lady is to leave herself a pittance only, for the remainder of her life! She is acting under some fearful influence;" and the good Doctor looked a *de lunatico inquirendo*. "It is perfectly incomprehensible!" he again ejaculated.

Mary could make no comment. The words of the Curate, disclaiming the aspersion of a mercenary sacrifice, came like an ice-bolt to her memory. They had given her comfort at the time;—they now offered a solution of that which, to Mr. Bolton, was enigmatical.

During Mrs. Calthorpe's visit that day to Lady Leverton, and while sitting, veiled, as it were by the curtain of the bed, Mary, asked her if Mr. Bolton's report was correct.

"How strange! That man knows everything!" was Mrs. Calthorpe's remark, further corroborating the report. "The Admiral and Mr. Harcourt went to town yesterday for the completion of the business. There are still two other trustees—Mr. Leigh, and Mr. Hills, the Architect. The Church and Parsonage matter goes smooth enough," was Mrs. Calthorpe's concluding observation. "Mr. Harcourt has made all the affair straight; and I hope that little Augusta Stratton will find the marriage come off as easily. It is curious, mixing up love and religion in this manner. I think there ought to be an effigy of the little creature in the Church, holding a balance. A model of a Church in one scale, and Cupid in canonicals in another. However, we do not hear every day of girls giving up £40,000 for the good of souls. It is something decidedly heroic; both in her, and Mr. Leigh. For I suppose the love which has given the money to the Church would have given it to the Pastor, if desired;

therefore we may consider both equally meritorious."

Mary could attempt no reply; and was powerless, even as regarded any attempt to conceal the strange effect which Mrs. Calthorpe's words produced; still it seemed to pass unobserved, and Mrs. Calthorpe shortly took her leave.

In our physical economy there is a special provision made for preventing pain from passing beyond a certain limit, and from enduring beyond a certain time. Pain, reaching an extreme degree of intensity, deadens the sensibility of the sentient nerve. It is the same with mental agony; as was shown by the species of torpor, with which Mary sat that evening by the fire, in the Viscountess's room. It was such, that she herself doubted the severity of the blow which had been struck. She knew not that the barb was even now in the wound—festering, corroding, and imparting to her corporeal system the very disorder of condition

which her mental one had undergone—almost to the extinction of life itself.

A long and fearful illness ensued. One that, while it deadened perception, threatened to extinguish reason altogether; but the results were more favourable than the most sanguine had dared to hope.

One fine afternoon in February, Mary awoke to consciousness; but all was still like the mist of a half re-called dream. By degrees, she was told that the little old woman in black was her father's aunt; that Mr. Joblyn was there, working for her welfare; that she—ah! this was never told her. It was rather a deadly draught of sorrow, suffered rather to percolate into her cup of bitterness, than be at once poured into it. Who could have whispered to the loving—the adoring—the as yet unweaned child, that the tomb held all that earth could claim of her mother? But still the drear truth came to her. And though at times, in

the soft twilight, she would look for her coming to her side—though at times, with strange forgetfulness of all that had passed, she would believe she heard her voice, and listen for her step; each day brought its sad, cold light to fright such happy phantasies; and she arose from the sick bed, where a brain fever had so long confined her, conscious of her orphanhood.

And now all the cankering cares of life came crowding around; jostling the heart's wasting grief that would have wept and loved on in utter recklessness. But this was not allowed her. She was told that her means of subsistence died with her mother. It failed to move her. But when the little old woman who called her niece, and whom Mr. Joblyn always designated as Miss Polly Dark, declared that she should share her slender means, and that she would never forsake her—then she wept bitterly. Tenderness seemed to smite on

her heart with tones of one that was gone—to make her feel more keenly that she was indeed gone; but she appreciated the affection of the aunt, which could thus bud forth at the claims of kindred, even though so long ignored by this once prosperous and aspiring portion of her family.

Amidst all the proofs of affection and consideration which had reached her, was a letter from her friend the Countess San Steffano, now become by the death of her father-in-law, Duchess of Castelotto. It was of the most affectionate and sympathising character. Entering at once into the difficulties of her present position, of which she was fully aware, the Duchess besought her at once to make her home with them: adding, with delicate *badinage*, that the Duke had insisted on her having a maid of honour to assist supporting her new dignity, for whom a salary of £300 a year was appropriated; and that the idea of sweet Mary

D'Arc thus constituting her court, was in itself so charming, she earnestly besought her to accede to her wishes.

Mrs. Calthorpe was nothing less cordial in her entreaties, that Mary would take up her residence with them; making it appear that she would thus be conferring—not receiving obligation. Scarcely knowing why, Mary refused both these offers. There was something prompted her to lean in her dependance where there was natural affinity; though, with the affectionate and candid nature of her aunt, every hour revealed traces of a low origin and confined education.

Although declining to make a protracted stay with Mrs. Calthorpe, Mary, soothed by her tenderness — won by the gentle and earnest sympathy of herself and the Admiral, consented to pay them a visit, previous to her departure into Buckinghamshire.

The Arches was to be given up at the end of March, when Mary had arranged to ac-

company Miss Polly Dark to her own little cottage at Marlow.

A dark cloud seemed to have set over the fortunes of Mary, and she felt it—not sentimentally—neither repiningly. She used none of those sad and morbid fancies, by which even griefs are enhanced, by comparing the bleak present with the happier past. Her sorrows were felt in all their sober and distinct reality; and her heart sickened, as the dull aimless *vista* of her future life opened its weary length to her consideration. But it was with gentleness and resignation, that she made the discovery that she had rested all this life's treasures, solely and wholly in this life's fragile bark—and it had suffered shipwreck. Neither did she scrutinise too narrowly all the weight of woe which depressed her. She had sat in the church beneath the small marble tablet which told the world of Ione, Viscountess Leverton, lying in the grave-yard near—which told the child that that bed of trust and con-

solation—a mother's heart—was cold. She had received the key of her plate and jewels, and a memorandum to the effect that £325 was invested in her name in the three per cent. consols; and was told by Mr. Joblyn that she then held the whole of her worldly means. And she had heard the church bells ring out one night a wild and startling peel, and was told it was on account of the news having just reached Deirham of the marriage of the Curate and Miss Stratton. And yet she distinguished not these divers causes of misery. She wept not that she was motherless—and poor—and that her heart's fondest love was crime; but she wept with an infant's piteousness at the sense of suffering.

CHAPTER VI.

"Who says the wan autumnal sun
Beams with too faint a smile
To light up nature's face again?"

KEBLE.

SIR WILLIAM AVISTON and Mrs. Calthorpe were the only surviving children of Dugald Aviston, land steward to the Marquis of Castlemorton, in Dorsetshire, and son to old Donald Aviston, who for fifty years had been head gardener to Baron Castlemorton, the father of the Marquis. A long line of Dugalds and Donalds could have been traced in the Aviston family, where they alternated; but it is as regards

the oaks, and not the lichen, that the lore of the genealogist is interesting. Dugald Aviston might have been considered Lord over the princely domains of Castlemorton, which spread over an immense tract of country in all the profitable variety to which well educated land lends itself; seeing that all the control and care of this vast territory rested in him. The Marquis knew that there he was a cypher, and knew, moreover, that, as regarded the management of these extensive estates, he was incompetent to be more: but, when he saw the man who handled all this wealth with strict integrity, justice and ability—living on contentedly in a small cottage in the park, changing none of his careful and unostentatious habits, the Marquis, with the best feelings of his heart, did homage to that blessed and blessing being —an honest man.

It is strangely incongruous, that the simple fact of a man not being a rascal, when full opportunity offered, should excite enthusiasm

in this our *soi-disant* land of Christendom; but so it was — and will be. In all Lord Castlemorton's gratitude and reverence for his honest steward, he felt, with the delicacy of the highbred gentleman, that increased pecuniary remuneration was not the fitting evidence of it; but, in avoiding one error, he fell into its opposite; and, while gratifying all the quick feelings of his retainer, by admitting his children to intimacy with his own, he risked doing them the harm which mixing with those so decidedly of superior caste is likely to effect.

Aviston had two sons and a daughter. The elder boy became wild, speculative and expensive; embarrassed his father, and died. The second, William, who was much younger, and an amiable and attractive creature, with his sister, was in constant intercourse with the children at the great house, sharing all their sports and pleasures; and, as they were much in the country, there was little interruption to the happiness thus offered to the young Avis-

tons. Lady Castlemorton was dead; otherwise, with the instinct which women exercise in such matters, she might have foreseen evil in that, which mixes degrees without forgetting them. As it was, the high born Mortons, knowing their father's exceeding regard for the steward, vied with each other in showing kindness to his children. In all their studies, as well as pleasures, Willie Aviston was constantly associated. Lady Anne and Lady Constance, with their brother Lord Morton, were a few years older than him; the little Lady Doris five years his junior; but, such was his boyish affection for the child, that he would never suffer her to be excluded from their games; and took as much trouble in planting the little creature at a wicket, and in putting a cricket bat into its tiny hand, as he did in bowling the elder girls out. And often, panting with exhaustion and fatigue, when roaming in the woods for birds' nests, wild strawberries, or hazel-nuts—the booty which renders a coppice such an

elysium for children—he would carry the little Doris on his back sooner than leave her out of the foraging party. This excited in her young heart the tenderest affection, which finished but with her life. School removed Willie from his noble patronesses; but the holidays always brought him to their side; and when at college, where by the munificence of the Marquis he was educated—whose gratitude still inclined to the exaltation of the steward's son—he was again their agent, furnishing them, with the greatest industry, with golden roads and useful hints in every study in which their fancies chose to embark. About this time the two elder girls married; but both Colonel St. Elmo and Lord Murdoch were taught by their youthful brides to respect their old play-fellow.

On leaving college, Willie Aviston was made private secretary to the Marquis; and now, unhappily, sprung up that attachment between himself and Lady Doris, of which their youthful intimacy had sown the seed. The Marquis

became aware of this imprudent passion. He then saw the fulfilment of a truth, which any of his Dorsetshire labourers could have taught him—that, if the inclosures to fine pastures are levelled, the cattle will leave the heath to graze there. Any old song would have told him as much ; but the bent of the Marquis was politics, not poetry. The discovery grieved, but did not anger him ; and, dissembling his knowledge of this ill-starred affection, for the better means of counteracting it, he obtained for the lovesick Willie the position of *attaché* to the Embassy at Vienna. Ignorant of his motives, Aviston only saw in this advancement, further proofs of the Marquis' favour, and better foundation for ulterior hopes. A piteous parting took place between himself and Lady Doris, in which they vowed eternal fidelity, as every parting lover has done before them. There was this consolation in their separation—Willie was now fairly launched in an honourable career, which in a measure lessened the

difference in their respective positions; that is, in their love dazzled-eyes. Facts were still the same; and the grand-daughter of the proud Lord Castlemorton was weeping on the bosom of his gardener's grand-son. Such chaotic heavings and sinkings of the frame-work of society are not singular. How are they to end?

Fortune seemed to favour Aviston; for by the further interest of his patron, who was then in the Ministry, at the expiration of three years he was nominated first secretary to the French Embassy. He had heard little of Lady Doris during this interval. The principal intelligence he gained was from his sister; who, though ignorant of his love, with the old habits of interest in all befalling the Castlemorton family, made them the chief subject of her letters. However, Miss Aviston saw but little of the Lady Doris, whose visits to the park were brief and infrequent. She spent the chief of her time with Lady Murdoch,

who then led a most dissipated life: so that all the information Aviston gleaned from his sister's letters was chiefly hearsay, and in a measure painful, as they related principally to the conquests and success of Lady Doris. At length he learnt from Miss Aviston, that her approaching marriage with the Earl of Ernetower was generally talked of. At the same time he received notice of it from Lord Castlemorton, who then first spoke of his knowledge of their youthful inclination for each other, as a thing that had given him great pain; but he rejoiced for both their sakes that it was overcome, as proved by Lady Doris' acceptance of the addresses of the Earl; and, if report spoke true, by his own approaching marriage with Mrs. Chivers, the *millionnaire* of the Rue Rivoli.

The latter was a strange intimation to Mr. Aviston; who, only visiting at the house of Mrs. Chivers, was conscious of no further link between them. That evening, however, at her

house, he received the congratulations of some of his friends on the same subject; while the widow herself, with the frankness of her character, and the freedom which the being some years his senior gave her, jested with him on the report, but yet in a manner denoting that her inclinations would be by no means averse to the reality.

Aviston was much perplexed by all this. It was necessary to write to the Marquis; and yet, was he to proclaim that his heart beat as fervently as ever for the faithless Doris? Could he offer congratulations on a subject that filled him with despair? He delayed his letter; when another reached him from Lord Castlemorton, begging his kind offices for Lord Ernetower, and that he would make arrangements for the hire of an hotel for the ensuing three months, which the newly-married pair wished to pass in Paris. This the heart-broken Aviston did; and made the obligation of writing to the Marquis upon the subject the occasion

of offering his congratulations on the approaching marriage.

At the expiration of a week, a paragraph in "Galignani" announced the arrival of part of the Earl of Ernetower's household and stud at the Hôtel d'Orvilliers, Chaussée d'Antin. A desperate anguish took possession of the Secretary. Was he then to meet the woman he so fondly idolized—as the bride of another? to meet her as one indifferent, and yet by the ties of old acquaintance and gratitude to her family, one to whom respect and attention must be paid? There seemed frenzy in the thought. He resolved to leave Paris; but the truth struck him, that he could not do so, without resigning his situation; and to do that was to consign himself to povery and obscurity. His aspiring mind quailed at the idea. He would feign illness: but to enable him to quit his post for any length of time, a medical certificate would be necessary. There was but one measure which presented itself to his distracted

understanding. It was at once to press his suit with Mrs. Chivers. She gladly conceded to his wishes; consented with the most generous confidence to his wish for haste; and, in two days after the asking, gave herself and her £100,000 to his keeping. They set off immediately for Bourdeaux, from whence they proceeded to Jersey and the Channel Islands, landing at Weymouth at the beginning of May.

From that place to the old cottage at Castlemorton was not a very long ride; and, in the hope of surprising his father and sister, Aviston set off the next morning early, claiming a day's leave from his kind, warm-hearted wife. It was given freely; while she begged him to fix upon a day for herself to pay them a visit.

Aviston reached Castlemorton about the middle of the day; but, unfortunately, found the cottage deserted, with the exception of a young servant, to whom he was unknown; the

steward and his daughter being in Scotland. Finding that he must stay a certain time for the refreshment of his horse, he could not resist the temptation of wandering once more amidst the old haunts of his happy youth. The first spot he sought was a sheltered dell; where, under a huge oak which spread its vast branches over the grassy bank, he had first ventured to speak of love to the soft-hearted Doris. Hastily descending the gentle declivity, his surprise may be imagined, on finding Lady Doris herself reclining on the bench at its base. Almost before he could believe the evidence of his sight, she had sprang to his bosom, exclaiming:

"I knew, Willie, you would come. I knew you would not marry. Oh! how cruel people have been to us."

Aviston held the affectionate young creature to his heart, which was too full to speak; and, overcome by the unexpected meeting, both shed tears. Lady Doris was the first to recover a degree of composure, and seemed wild, as with

joy. She asked him if he had heard she was going to be married; and told him, that, when her father insisted on her giving her consent, she had become so ill, her marriage was put off; and then at last, she had got up her courage and told Lord Ernetower that she never could love him so well as he deserved to be; and that he was so kind, and had arranged it so gradually and tenderly with her father, that he had not spoken one angry word to her since. She told him that she was now alone at Castle-morton with Lady Murdoch and her children, as they thought that she was still very ill; but now she was sure that she should soon get well. Aviston looked at her flushed cheeks and radiant eyes, and thought so too; though he observed that, in spite of all the furs and wraps with which she was enveloped that fine May morning, she still appeared a mere shade.

Lady Doris had talked so much, she had scarcely given her agitated lover time to have disclosed his own history, even had he been so

disposed. But it was a task to which he felt that he could never school his lips. While revolving in his own mind what course it were well to pursue, a female attendant approached, reminding her Ladyship that it was time to return to the house; and a man-servant at the moment brought up a wheeled chair.

"You will come to-morrow to see me;" she said, gaily. "I will tell Lady Murdoch that you are here; she will be charmed to see you, and shew you her pretty little children. There is a tiny Doris, who, she says, is the image of me when you used to make me play at cricket in the *bon vieux temps*. You must come to-morrow, at two o'clock, for they make me dine at one."

Could Aviston then explain? Could he then refuse? He could but press fervently the poor fragile hand she gave, and promise obedience.

Though Aviston galloped quickly homeward, he did not reach Weymouth until late. His

wife had waited dinner an hour, and had finished by ordering it up. She was just discussing a lobster salad with concluding gusto, having kindly reserved his dinner for him. What a contrast was offered by the buxom, rosy *gastronome*, surrounded by her viands, to the dying sylph he had just quitted! His very soul sickened. There seemed no other resource, in the misery which oppressed him, than to plead indisposition and retire to bed, where he actually wept from distress of mind.

The next morning, without fully facing all the bearings of the case, Aviston ordered a carriage to take him to Castlemorton. The possibility of meeting his sister, whom he had missed the preceding day, was given as the reason for this step. It was the only disingenuousness of which he was ever guilty towards his confiding wife.

He left the carriage at the cottage, and walked up by the well-known shrubbery-path

to the "great house;" as, in the days of his youth, it had been always called. He was profoundly anxious as to the reception he should meet from Lady Murdoch; but he resolved to seek the opportunity of a private interview with her, and claim her advice and sympathy.

For this reason Aviston rather rejoiced, on finding that it wanted still half an hour to the time at which Lady Doris had appointed him to be there. Following the well-known meanderings of the woody path, it brought him to a private entrance near the library, which it was his plan to enter, and there, ringing for a servant, ask to see Lady Murdoch, without suffering his name to be announced before Lady Doris, whom he felt that he must not again endeavour to see without the cognizance of her sister.

Unclosing the glass-door which opened into a little stone vestibule, where, in days gone by, had stood their hoops, and cricket and archery

toys, he passed on to the library. The shutters were closed; though from their being unfastened, sufficient light entered the crevices to allow him to direct his course to one, which he hastily unclosed, and turned to revel in the sight of a scene of so much passed happiness. His eyes rested on a coffin in the middle of the room. Some instinctive anticipation told him who lay there. He advanced to its side; and there indeed was poor Doris, lying in her grave-clothes,—which hung in snowy drapery around the coffin,—and covered by the choicest flowers strewed over her. He took a large white rose that was placed in the small, attenuated hand, when steps behind caused him to turn. It was the old housekeeper, who knew him well, and who had come to take her watch by the side of her young lady; the person who had preceded her having, by a few minutes, anticipated the moment of relief, in consequence of the dinner-bell having sounded! and yet that very person had cried

all night at the sudden death of her young mistress. How strongly the animal wants mix up with the sorrows of the mind!

Aviston learnt that Lady Doris had died half an hour after he had left her. There had, then, been mercy in the concealment of his marriage; there had been true sister-love in the hopes whispered by Lady Murdoch, that she would again see him—that he might come—though so little probability had then existed of their fulfilment. He had come; and she died as happily as if a long life of wedlock had found her a dying old woman in the arms of a decrepid old man. And it is to such a climax that young loves and young hopes turn.

How zealously the world sometimes seems to try, by its gewgaws, to soothe its children who carry about with them some inward hurt. Honour, wealth, consideration—everything for which his youthful heart had craved, even to aching, came showering upon Aviston; and a leaf of the willow which hung over the marble

urn in the churchyard at Castlemorton would have been dearer! But this sentimentality passed away. The world pushed in between him and his sorrows. Time smeared with its defacing touch the characters once so sharply marked, and old aspirings sprung up with greater force from their temporary cutting-down. At length a widower of fortune, and a distinguished diplomatist, he again looked out on the things interesting to widowers and diplomatists. He saw Mary D'Arc. She was the very creation for an ambassador's wife. It was all which his crushed feelings now sought in a mate.

Mrs. Calthorpe entered warmly into his wishes, and lent herself to the task of furthering them with tact and delicacy. She confided to Mary the sad story of his love. It was heard with surprise, and yet with sympathy. The idea of the stiff, gum-bottled diplomatist ever having breathed or thought with reference to anything but embassies, protocols, *attachés*,

and the Foreign Office, had never occurred to er; but the story had its desired effect. There was much satisfaction in the feeling that, in associating in herself, Sir William in a measure lost that sense of melancholy which usually oppressed him, and which she had interpreted as the apathy of the statesman to the triflings of the world. She, in her turn, found comfort in the society of one who could look for no gaiety in his companion, or aught beyond the mere interchange of thoughts, quiet and sombre as his own. Mary had all her life lived for pleasing; and it was even now soothing to find that she still could do so, and yet hug her grief and her grievous recollections to her heart.

Mary spent three months with the Calthorpes in London; and, at the beginning of the fourth, left England for Naples as Lady Aviston, to which court Sir William was named Minister.

She felt that she had chosen well; and the

fact of her union with one, for whom she had no feeling beyond a certain calm regard and approval, struck her as nothing contrary to rule or regulation. Her whole course of life had familiarized her with the system it involved. Nine-tenths of her female acquaintance would have done the same; indeed, had done it. And yet the plea of these bright flutterers amidst scenes of excitement and dissipation, is the opportunity which they afford of forming attachments, and therefore matrimonial connections. We grant the premises; and yet who does not see every day that the foregoing clause is by no means attended to, and the acceptance of any advantageous offer of marriage in most cases independant of it.

Though heart-torn and wearied with the pressure of a passion, which had been so suddenly thrust back to its source at the moment of its greatest expansion, Mary found nothing disturbing in the addresses of Sir William. She had been wooed for a foreign minister's

wife, and wedded as such. To her it was an easy vocation. All her past habits had prepared her for the place; and she fell back upon a life of show and representation, as readily and gracefully as habit—that second nature—teaches. Had Sir William then betrayed much more feeling than he would have shown in engaging his private secretary, there would have been a jar to her heart, which might have interfered with his hopes. But Mary felt that she was secured as an *appanage* precious and desireable to his position. The idea flattered her; while, in the calm self-possession and gravity of her suitor, there was something which commanded her respect, as powerfully as his sadness and solitary position claimed her sympathy.

A year of married life much changed the relative sentiments of the two. That gentleness and kindness of disposition, by which Mary, with earnest compassion, had sought to banish from the mind of her husband the

depressing recollections of his first love, joined to her exceeding beauty and attractions, had transformed the cold, formal diplomatist—he who had sought merely a partner and assistant in the state and grandeur, to which all his aspiring notions turned—into the ardent yet timid, the adoring yet guarded lover. Still, with the moderation and wariness of his *métier*, he dissembled all this. With the new perceptions lent by the powerful sentiment which had usurped dominion over him, he felt that its interests demanded that it should still be hid; and, by the light which his own love shed, he discovered that her affection for himself bore but little resemblance to his own. But he veiled its ardent nature to the best of his powers. And it was well that he did so: well that the nature of his duties, and the careful way in which he fulfilled them, with the public life they forced him to lead, precluded all possibility of domestic privacy. A month's solitude with Mary would have betrayed to

him that she had married the Foreign Minister—the wealthy and rising statesman—the eligible—and in short the *à-propos* suitor; not the man.

The first year of Mary's wedded life just unbuilt the very ideal she had formed, leaving all the thoughts, feelings, expectations, prejudices and education of a preceding life, a mass of unused, unrequired and broken materials, cumbering the ground to the hindrance of the construction of a proper fabric of married happiness. How many women could shew the same! Their experience, if collected, might make a tolerable scarecrow for the rising generation of brides. But, unless the schooling of young women for married life is not reformed, with the extended knowledge obtained, the disclosure had better not be made. The confession of one woman would do but little towards ameliorating the condition of the married classes. Let all hymeneal difficulties, then, be kept within the bosom they disturb.

One other counsel we may offer. Let the wife consider the condition of her first prototype; and feel, as Eve might have felt, that she was neither the scull, the spinal column, the arm, nor the leg of her husband; but simply the rib. By analogy, therefore, she had nothing to do with the affairs of the head, of strength of work, or movement; but, as rib, was formed to protect all the inward interests—a guard to his actual vitality. We cannot well compliment Eve on her efficient carrying out of the design of her creation; but modern wives may take the hint; and remember, that should the husband fate has given them, not appear quite worthy the holy watch over his welfare, the neglect of a post can never be defended by the discovery of its small importance. A wife's opinion in the matter is rendered of little moment by that sweeping clause in the marriage ceremony, "for better or worse;" which, precluding the utility of all post-hymeneal judgements, necessitates still more

strongly a minute investigation prior to the irremediable conclusion.

Mary had not made this investigation; still, there was no fault to be found with the course of life laid out before her, or the husband who directed it. Her days passed exactly as she might have anticipated — a never-ceasing mixing up with her fellow creatures; and those the best-born, best-bred, best-dressed of the locality where she existed. Could she complain? It was impossible. Its failure, then, in producing happiness was owing to other causes. It was in herself; and she shuddered with a sense of lengthened and ever enduring *ennui* and discomfort. Life seems so long when the road does not quite lie in the direction we desire.

Neither could Mary find fault with her husband. He was still the same mild, gentlemanly, clever, grave, honourable man who had wooed her. But now she had come behind the curtain; and the wife of a plenipotentiary

finds as many downfallings as the hero's valet. With all the high and important matter occupying a foreign minister, there is a good deal of minor twaddle and detail. Sir William, with an anxious mind which rather multiplied trivialities, an immense consideration for rank, and withal, a never-slumbering desire of making friends among the influential, whom he regarded in the light of stepping-stones, dealt in little things to the full as much as in the weightier affairs of his *bureau*. Mary was disappointed in finding, that, instead of disposing of the affairs of kingdoms, the duties of the British Minister at Naples, as Sir William construed them, approximated a good deal to a master of the ceremonies, or a *lacquais de place*. She knew not, that, in the opinion of a genuine diplomatist, he is nothing, while there is something better which he might be. She knew not that all the aspirations of Sir William turned to the English Embassy, at the Court of the Tuileries; while his impression was, that

this was a point in advancement to be attained quite as much by political intrigue and personal influence, as by a character for efficiency. Ignorant of his motives, Mary often thought that a great deal of attention was paid to people, whose individual merit scarcely claimed any. With this there was also a susceptibility to slight; and an eager assertion of all the consequence to which he could lay claim, that to her, just proved what it was meant to conceal—the slender amount of dignity attending a Minister to any of the petty States of the Continent. Sir William's style of machinations worried her. Too gentle and lady-like to betray her dissatisfaction, she, however, gave rise to it in her husband's bosom, by failing to work up to what was required of her; and, with what he considered wilful blindness, omitting, in her own person, to second that extent of diplomacy, which can serve self, even whilc serving the crowned head whose authority it bears.

Sir William, in spite of the adoration with which he viewed his beautiful wife, suffered this dislike to her *poco curante* proceedings to appear. To Mary it seemed littleness. The love was wanting, which, in that mysterious crucible—a woman's heart, can give a gilding even to the crimes of the object loved.

An eloquent author,* speaking of the love, reverence, and obedience enjoined on a wife, says; "For the exercise of this great affection and devotedness, she is furnished with corresponding moral means. She is thus to love and devote herself to the husband of her choice, the man whose appearance, and disposition of spirit, and character all combined to engage her affections, and whose choice of her, and love to her, fixed them for ever. Her affection is not a vain, unnatural effort of the will, but the sweet, and easy, and harmonious response of a loving heart. The influences from

* "Genuine and Spurious Religion," by the Rev. J. Mühleisen.

without are such as are fitted to act upon, and move it; and choice, and love, and devotedness are but the natural expressions of the movements within. Is she to love him? He is also to love her as himself — to love and nourish, and cherish her as his own body. Is she to have no other love but him? He is also to love none besides her. Is she always to exhibit a meek and quiet spirit? He is also to love her, and never be bitter against her. Is she to reverence him? He is to cultivate every excellence, and do all that is calculated to call forth respect and esteem. Is she to devote herself to him, and be subject to him in everything, as the Church is subject to Christ? He is to love her even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for her. There are great ends, and at the same time great means, great affections, and also great and suitable objects to call them forth; great duties, and also great motives to yield the power of performing them. This constitution of things is

like the constitution of the universe; it is like the work of God."

This synopsis of the blissful relations of marriage would have been as an unknown tongue to Mary. There had been no choice, no engaging of affections, in the union which circumstances, rather than inclination, had effected. To have talked to her of the "harmonious response of a loving heart," would have been mockery. Happily for her present peace, the perfection of married happiness had never been an object of consideration. She was therefore less likely to remark its absence in her own case. Her matrimonial experience, however, taught her one important truth, which perhaps it were well to promulgate. It is this: That a woman can inflict no more deadly injury on a man who seeks her from motives of affection, than to wed him with a heart not perfectly divested of passion for another.

If a stone fell out of St. George's Hanover Square for every union so undertaken, what a

ruin it would be: yet, perhaps, even that would fail to speak the warning "to persons about to marry." No words can palliate the sin of marrying with an engaged heart; no circumstance can exculpate the cruelty thus practised, but a previous admission to the bridgroom elect of the fact. Mary felt this in all its extent; and now, with vain contrition, sought, by tender cares and unslumbering observance, to guard the unloved husband from the truth. She thought she succeeded, and it gave zeal to her endeavours to find it so. It was strange what a semblance of conjugal devotion and watchfulness resulted from this consciousness of failure in affection.

Lady Aviston was aware of this; and sometimes wondered at the degree of impassibility which had come over her, and the apathy with which she now mixed in scenes that once would have lent such gladness and animation to her feelings. Was everything joyous past away? Was life at her age always thus—a

desert? She had asked herself the question once; but she had feared to repeat it. She feared the elucidation which an examination into her heart might offer; and tried to render it unnecessary, by entering with greater ardour into all the gay doings which at that period constantly assembled the cream of the Neapolitan society into one focus. Alas! the inappetency still turned all into trouble and *ennui*.

This torpor under which she laboured, extended itself to nursery affairs; and even maternity failed in the exquisite joy it is supposed to yield.

About one year after her marriage, the *accouchement* of Lady Aviston took place; nearly under the same gorgeous circumstances which had accompanied the birth of a Prince of the Blood, a few weeks previously. It was precisely this state which interfered with the natural pleasure of the mother; and though, when she pressed the beautiful little boy to her

bosom, there was a pleasurable sensation, it would certainly have been more perfect without the vain ceremonial attending all this. A Queen could hardly have the simple privileges of a mother more interrupted; and, when vexed and embarrassed by all the little pomp of her nursery establishment, she ceased to wonder, as the circumstance recurred to her memory, at the immense pleasure it was to Lady Eloisa to associate with her babies without the looking on of their attendants.

Sir William had no drawback to the happiness which the birth of this beautiful infant created, but the small one of choosing its name. Men, high and influential, had been secured as sponsors; and their names bestowed on the child must have told to the world the distinguished ushers which the young child had into Christianity.

But still it was the Dugald generation in the Aviston family—the Donald one having passed prematurely away; and there was a hard

struggle between "Arthur Wellesley," and the old custom in his family. The Scotch reverence for the latter prevailed; and the plenipotentiary's child received the name which the gardener's child had taken, as a matter of course, some eighty years back.

This same little Dugald grew up a splendid specimen of human beauty; and Mary would gaze at him with undissembled pride, while the delighted father seemed to gain fresh incitement for the adoration of his wife in the loveliness of her child. But even here there were drawbacks to her pleasure. Born with some of the aspiring tendencies of his father, Dugald disdained all the tender treatment which it is a mother's joy to bestow, and contested with strange pertinacity all which seemed to proclaim him a child. With his first articulate words, he was self-declared "a big man;" and all his actions went to confirm the delusion. He declined to kiss a little baby Contessa, who was presented to him, on the score that his

whiskers might scrub her pretty little cheeks; and very contemptuously told a lady, who invited him to sit on her knees, that his weight would infallibly break them. Lady Aviston loved him, never contested the fact of his being a "big man," and most complacently professed belief in his rough whiskers; but a sweet, little kissing baby girl would have afforded a tenderer source of joy than did this *homme à visions*, as Rousseau might justly have named the pride-deluded Dugald.

Six years had passed without the Avistons leaving Naples, except for occasional excursions into the neighbourhood. Mary pined a little for England, but feared it might shatter many plans of Sir William, if in spite of the objections he showed, she should further urge him to revisit it.

She heard occasionally from Mrs. Calthorpe, and read of the affairs of Deirham with an interest which lost nothing of its intensity with the lapse of time. The news of the

Heathfield Parsonage was mixed up with other parish annals by Mrs. Calthorpe, apparently without a suspicion of its greater importance in Lady Aviston's eyes. By these chronicles she learnt that a valueable living had been presented to Mr. Leigh, through the interest of Lady Maldyn's father—the fish-sauce man—with the Chancellor. This had not necessitated his leaving his new church and schools at Heathfield, which, had such been the case, it appeared would have been a reason for his declining it. There were sundry and annual births of little girls also mentioned, as taking place at the Parsonage; and the last intelligence recieved, intimated that Mr. Leigh was just made Archdeacon of the diocese.

CHAPTER VII.

"It is much better to reprove, than to anger secretly; and he that confesses his fault shall be preserved from hurt. How good is it, when thou art reproved, to show repentance! for so shalt thou escape wilful sin."

THE WISDOM OF THE SON OF SIRACH.

In a society like Naples, where English wives give themselves more liberty than elsewhere, and Italian cavaliers take it, Lady Aviston moved a marvel of discretion. But there was one in that society who had discovered the secret of her apathy. He had omitted nothing of the undermining process, by which, as an Irresistible, he had caused more misery than

ages of forbearance could have expiated; but still he had made no impression on the Envoy's splendid wife. It was a check he had never before experienced, where a husband had been alone the obstacle; for he had always so chosen, that the husband's weakness should prove his strength. He guessed, then, that there was some other object intervening between him and his demoniacal hopes. For months, nay years, he watched for the rising of this rival in the hemisphere, where she, who worshipped the distant star, now moved. He came not. This looker-out for signs and solstices had never seen the lip of Lady Aviston tremble, or the incontrollable pulsation of the throat betray what an otherwise calm exterior and a schooled voice might have concealed. Still, he swerved not from the idea, that the heart he would occupy closed over some dear, though distant idol; and, with the vengeance of a foiled profligate, he dared to whisper his suspicion into Lady Aviston's ear. What a

burst of scorn and indignation was the consequence! It was a further corroboration; and contributed to soothe the bruised vanity, which writhed under the consciousness of failure with a woman, whose previous life of display and dissipation and the circumstance of her union with a man many years her senior, he had conceived would render her amenable to the baleful laws it was his aim to impose on those wives, who, like pick-pockets, finding the first steps in vice taken with impunity, persist to their final destruction. It was true that this man had never detected aught in the outward bearing of Lady Aviston to make him believe her more than a beautiful statue; but the dismay with which she now appeared to behold him, confirmed every foregone conclusion. By a refinement of art, he used her dread and aversion of himself as instruments towards establishing something like an understanding between them, something most oppo-

site to the tranquil indifference with which she associated with other men.

Singularly enough, the only person for whom Mary had ever conceived great dislike, became the object to Sir William of the most disturbing suspicions; and she saw with feelings of consternation, that jealousy could be called up in his bosom, with all its gloomy concomitants of doubt and loving hate. It was a discovery which seemed to bid fair to displace all the calm and confidence that time had established between them.

There was difficulty in her every step; and she found that the very avoidance of the fiend, who sought to draw her within his fatal influence, was construed by Sir William into a cause for further anxiety. He told this to his wife. She felt that she dared not explain her conduct, or divulge the insult she had received; and thus concealment and subterfuge became necessary. A change of conduct was

impossible. Anything less than the display of direct disapprobation would be hailed by one, who knew too well his gain by encroachment, to miss the opportunity offered. Could she warn Sir William of his aims, and thus make an open foe of him? Conscience said no. And thus powerless, thus shackled, she had the pain of discovering, with his aversion to the wily Neapolitan, a severity of manner to herself, and a fixed melancholy in his own demeanour.

In the midst of all this serious perplexity, the recal of Sir William from the Court of Naples took place.

The spring was now fast advancing; and Lady Aviston felt beyond measure rejoiced, when Sir William proposed that they should proceed to Florence, and there await a further change of the Ministry—which he had been instructed to expect would in all probability re-instate him in office—in preference to awaiting that change in *Napoli la gentile.*

In quitting the fair city, Lady Aviston trusted she might be escaping much of the anxiety she had there encountered; but to her sorrow she found gloom and despondency still marking the manners of her husband—particularly to herself. She tried to think that political vexations might have something to do with it; but her penetration could not be so deceived. Patience and gentleness were the only anodynes she could offer for the evident disquietude of his mind, and she hoped that in time she should win him back to that indulgence which had marked his conduct during the first years of their marriage; but all this much interfered with the pleasure which the change of scene and climate, with all the interesting eye-treasures of beautiful Florence, were calculated to produce.

They had been about a month at Florence; when one evening, while taking coffee previous to going to the Opera, which their Italianized habits almost necessitated their attending, Sir

William, who had seemed more than usually abstracted and in low spirits during dinner, having left to his wife the care of amusing the few guests dining with them, said with the same gloomy air:

"Whom do you think I met to-day, Mary?"

She changed countenance, as she said with alarm:

"Surely not the *Principe!*" For her mind had reverted with quickness to the traitor of Naples.

"Oh! no;" Sir William replied rather ironically — "nothing quite so distinguished. Merely the Deirham Curate, with his odd little wife and Mrs. Gordon."

The cup of coffee, which Sir William was at the moment handing to his wife, dropped from her hands. It was necessary, she said, that she should change her dress, ere she could proceed to the Pergola; and, as the carriage was then waiting, she at once withdrew.

The little confusion, which had followed the sudden fall of the coffee-cup, had precluded the opportunity of Lady Aviston making any remark as to the unexpected appearance of her English friends; but during the Opera she made inquiries to Sir William concerning them. She learnt that they were travelling on account of Mrs. Gordon's health, which had been failing; and remained but a few days more in Florence, having been there already above a week.

"You will ask them to dine with us to-morrow?" she inquired in rather a tremulous voice. "We can invite the Seymours to meet them. Lady Jane used to be very intimate with Mrs. Gordon in old times, and knows all about them."

Sir William paused before he answered, and then said with an attempt at lightness:

"I do not see that we are at all obliged to do the honours of Florence. We are here

quite as private people. If we are to ask every tourist that we meet in the streets, with whom we have some slight acquaintance, we may as well keep open house."

Lady Aviston looked discomposed, as she said:

"It may be all true what you say—but I do not think that it applies to the Leighs, who have claims on our attention as friends, besides being strangers in Florence."

Sir William bent his head with a most ministerial inclination. Mary knew the bow, and what it meant, as well as possible. It was used on all occasions when assent was disagreeable and denial difficult. It had never been brought into action with herself before. She did not like the aspect of things; but further conversation on the subject was interrupted by the entrance of some Englishmen into their box; and it was not again reverted to that evening.

Sir William never breakfasted with his wife; but the next morning, as was his custom, he came early to her sitting-room to learn her plans for the day.

She had nerved herself for firmness both as to manner and action; and therefore in answer to her husband's inquiries replied, perhaps with more asperity than the case excused—pettishness so well hides cowardice—that, whatever the objection to asking his sister's friends to dinner might be, there could be surely none to her calling; and she had therefore already ordered her carriage to be in readiness as early as ten o'clock, that she might call before they had left home for sight-seeing.

Sir William regarded her with a steadfast air, as she spoke; but neither did her eyes fall nor her voice tremble. With an expression of mockery, almost approaching to wrath, he answered:

"My sister must be gratified by the atten-

tion paid with such *empressement* to her friends. Is the spilt coffee, and the spoilt dress to be placed to her account?"

The colour rose to the very temples of Lady Aviston. Sir William had taken hold of the weak point of her speech; and she felt convicted of a paltry, perhaps cowardly subterfuge, in ascribing to a remote cause her wish of being kind to the Leighs. But her pride rose at the severity or ill-temper which had thus sarcastically remarked it; and, with something very unlike the gentleness of her usual manner, she said:

"You take a very ridiculous way of interfering with my wishes. However, it is perfectly immaterial to me, whether my intention of calling upon Mrs. Leigh, be ascribed to my own, or to Mrs. Calthorpe's friendship for her and her husband;" and, with an air of regal dignity—or bravado—she rang a little jewelled bell which stood by her on the table, desiring the servant who came from the anti-

chamber, to order the carriage immediately to the door.

A paleness as of death spread over Sir William's features; but he spoke no more, and withdrew without even looking at Lady Aviston. So much anger had never passed between them, during the six years of their wedded life; and Mary felt astounded at seeing how soon a storm had arisen.

For some minutes she felt disposed to follow him, and extenuate her own contumacy; and then reflection seemed to show her that he had acted with caprice and uncalled for harshness, and that it were better to show that she was not to be so treated without exciting her resentment. Her maid at the moment entering with her shawl, announcing that the carriage was then waiting, decided her on adhering to her first resolution; though she lingered, still feeling averse to an act which, however simple, seemed to excite so many disturbing feelings in

her husband; and fancied that he might return and explain more explicitly his reason for dissatisfaction. Still he came not.

She felt agitated and dismayed as she passed through the drawing-rooms on her way to the carriage, at once wishing, yet fearing to encounter Sir William; half apprehending some scene of violence, in which she might be forbidden to act as she proposed; but she entered her *caléche* without opposition.

Sir William had mentioned that the Leighs were staying at one of the Hotels in the Piazza del Gran' Duoo; and Lady Aviston felt glad of the few minutes which must elapse ere reaching it, that she might a little recover the calmness and presence of mind necessary for her visit. There was a perturbation in her feelings which made her at one minute think of returning and asking her husband to accompany her, or at least give his reasons for wishing her to desist from a measure, which it was evident that he

did not like, though he failed in urging his objections; and then she felt that in giving up her resolves, there would appear a degree of submission and a wish to conciliate, which would at once be deceitful and servile; as at the moment she still felt offended and annoyed.

Ere she had quite arrived at a determination, the carriage drove into the Piazza del Gran' Duco, and at a short distance she beheld the trio of whom she was in search. There was no mistaking the tall ecclessiastical looking figure of Mr. Leigh, or the very English outline of his little wife, and Mrs. Gordon's rigid neatness. Pulling the check-string, she pointed them out to the coachman, desiring him to follow them quickly, and to draw up on reaching them.

The moment of trial was come. Pressing her hand to her eyes, she leant back in the carriage, trying to exclude at once the sight,

and the thoughts which that sight had awakened; feeling, that, unless by a desperate effort she recovered her tranquillity, this meeting should never have been attempted. The carriage stopped suddenly. Now then must be the struggle. She leant forward to make her greeting, and found Sir William only standing at the door.

By one of those singular alleys one finds in all foreign cities, he had reached the Piazza by a shorter way, and at the distance had made signals for the coachman to stop, who of course had seen no reason for disobeying. Motioning the *chasseur* to open the door, he placed himself by the side of Lady Aviston, telling the coachman to drive slowly to the Cascina. By a furtive glance she observed that he was still exceedingly pale, with an expression of trouble and emotion which she could not well account for.

For some minutes neither spoke. Mary's

silence was from no particular feeling of ill-will, but from perfect inability to proffer a word after the whirl which her ideas had so lately taken. Sir William seemed to feel still greater difficulty in uttering, and she could see by the movement of his facial muscles, that he was deeply moved. At length, placing his trembling hand on her arm, he said:

"Mary, I am come to make a most humble and heartfelt apology to you. I have behaved with an outrageous rudeness—a want of feeling, which I fear must be difficult for you to forgive. But you must hear all that I have to say before you refuse to pardon me."

Implacability was not Mary's sin, and she was struck by the sadness of Sir William's tone. Laying her hand softly on his own, she said kindly:

"Oh! do not talk any more about it. We have not had many such matrimonial *fracas*. I dare say I have been equally to blame."

Passing his arm around her, he drew her gently, but firmly to his bosom, kissing the back of her neck with passionate fondness. She felt the hot tears drop on her neck. Her own too flowed. She had not believed the guarded Sir William capable of betraying such incontrollable agitation.

"Now, hear me, Mary;" he said at last, "and see if you can still love me. After my first introduction to you at Desborough Abbey, possessed as I was with admiration for your many attractions, I had still the foresight to ask of Lady Maldyn if she knew of any engagement that you might have. She explained that she knew but little of you, but would make inquiries of Mr. Regulus Tarleton,—who knew all the *on dits* of the neighbourhood,—without in any way implicating my name. The result of this inquisition was the information that Captain Essenden was decidedly enamoured of you, the Curate of Deirham

probably so; while your feelings towards them were wholly problematical. I avoided making inquiries of my sister. Knowing her exceeding partiality for yourself, and her desire for my marrying, I felt that I could not rely on her information, but resolved to abide by my own impressions, and the experience which long observation and knowledge of the world had given me.

"Once seeing you in company with Captain Essenden, resolved all difficulty in that quarter. I saw the poor young man actually withering with overwhelming passion, though all his better feelings were struggling against it; and I pitied him for the fatal fascination which still kept him within your circle, gathering fresh fuel for his own martyrdom. But I saw you perfectly indifferent. Kind, cordial, perhaps a little coquettish, but certainly nothing beyond the conventional freedom allowed to young women in the world. As regarded Mr. Leigh and yourself, I could not so easily come to a con-

clusion. That he had loved you, or did then love you, was plainly perceptible to my first observations; but that he stemmed with a monstrous force the current of his passion, was also evident. Was this from your rejection, or from a belief that his love was unwise. This was difficult to ascertain. I was also at fault as to your feelings. There was something decidedly wanting of that *beau tranquil* which usually marked your manners; still I could not fathom whether you pitied him as one you had forbidden to love you, or that you even then sought, with the instinct of a passion-moved heart, to awaken his. Time solved what my penetration failed to unravel. Rumours got about of the Curate's engagement to Miss Stratton. Mrs. Gordon made no secret of her ward's affection; and it was not to be supposed that a man without any fortune would thwart the hopes of a young amiable heiress, whose fifty thousand pounds, after all, might be the

least of her merits. As it turned out, however, rumour had spoken of the engagement before it existed; and the marriage took place under circumstances entirely precluding the suspicion of any mercenary motives, an exalted religious enthusiasm having evidently led to the appropriation of so fine a fortune to the service of the Church. It was said that, previous to his marriage, Mr. Leigh had made a disclosure to Miss Stratton, of an attachment to yourself; but this I did not believe, guessing that it came from poor Mrs. Gordon's confused repository of ideas, and improved on by her *confidante* and crony, the Doctor's wife, who as discreetly had mentioned it to my sister; be that as it may, the marriage satisfied me. However imprudent an attachment to yourself might be, in a worldly point of view, I felt that Mr. Leigh could not thus have renounced all hope, if you had smiled. Your subsequent acceptation of myself, dear Mary, finally removed all doubt. I knew that

your heart was high and honourable in its aspirations, and would have shrunk from the outrage of bringing divided affections to a ceremony, where, before God, you plighted and received vows of fidelity and truth."

Sir William, as he spoke the concluding words, clasped his wife closer to his bosom; thus impeding by the action, the shudder of horror which passed over the frame of the self-accused Mary, who at the moment felt fainting with anguish and confusion of spirit.

After a short pause, Sir William continued, with broken and hurried words:

"Although I was thus satisfied, in a short time such was my adoration, such had become my excessive tenderness for you, that I felt dissatisfied with the degree of coldness which I fancied that I perceived in your feelings; and the horrible idea intruded itself that this might arise, from their having already undergone the blight of an unanswered love. Oh! Mary, even had you hated me, you must have pitied

me, had you known the agonizing suspicions that, in the course of the last six years, have at one time bent my spirit almost to desponding idiotcy, or at another roused it with the frenzy of jealousy; my love, my worship of you remaining intact through it all. My every effort was used to conceal all this from you, and I believed I had succeeded; but it was this unworthy doubt of you which made me so often oppose your wish of visiting England, and invent a thousand obstacles to hinder it. I knew that we could not return without visiting Deirham, and I quailed with horror at the idea of what that visit might reveal to me. It was strange, that at the same time I believed that I could discern that the profligate Orsini had formed designs on you. I hesitated not to repel his attempts at intimacy with contempt and indignation, fearing that I saw in you an indulgence, —a leaning towards him which might prove your ruin. When, singularly enough, by the most insidious and scarcely-uttered insinuations,

he made me understand that you were even then languishing for a distant love. This, for a moment, added to the dark feelings that had invaded me; and though I attempted to believe that my previous impression had lent a form to vague and wanton whisperings, they reverted again and again, giving many an hour of pain."

Sir William here paused; perhaps, expecting some answer, but Mary made no attempt to speak, and he continued with a firmer and less hurried expression:

"Now, Mary, I come to the end of this exposition of weakness—but of unswerving love. Death in my path could not have more affected me, than did the meeting yesterday with Mr. Leigh; and goaded—driven by unworthy feelings, I have dared to wound you—to be unmannerly—brutal. But a better spirit has come over me. Perhaps it has been your firmness—your openness that has reassured me. I know not—but I have abjured

all doubt—all suspicion. I tell you Mary—that my life—my soul is in your keeping. The knowledge of your love for another would lead to violence that might endanger both. But nothing short of knowledge shall make me doubt you. Now, my blessed wife," he concluded, folding her once more nearer to his bosom, ere he quite released her. "I will never again pain or offend you by such disclosures. I will now leave you. You will soon recover the distress I have caused you. You can drive quietly round the Cascina; and I will walk back and send Dugald and his nurse down in my cabriolet to join you. In the meantime, I will call and do all as you wish regarding the Leighs; and ask them to dine with us and meet the Seymours to-day. Do you forgive me, Mary?" She sobbed forth a murmur of sorrow and affection; and, leaving the carriage, Sir William walked hastily away.

For an hour Lady Aviston moved slowly

among the drives of the Cascina with scarcely outward consciousness, so great was the commotion of her inward feelings, so manifold the crowd of thoughts pressing on her mind, so humbling the convictions accompanying them. At length she aroused herself, directing the coachman to draw up by the Porta al Prato, in order to wait for Dugald and his cabriolet.

He was long in coming, and she was glad it was so; as she was better enabled to recover the necessary composure, and lose the redness of her eyes, which she was sure her excessive weeping must have produced. At length she saw through the sun blinds of her carriage, which were all drawn up—so fearful had she been that the agitation she had undergone should have been witnessed by any acquaintance—Dugald's cabriolet draw up just at her horses' heads. He was preparing to spring out, disdaining the assistance of the nurse, when a well known voice, addressing him, struck consternation on her heart. It was

that of Mr. Leigh dissuading the child from the leap. But his words were of no avail,—Dugald took the spring; and, as might have been expected, came down on his face and hands. Mr Leigh hastily lifted him up; and the "big man's" spirit was for a moment quelled; for there were some small pieces of gravel sticking in his little hands, which, with a baby's whimper, he began to pick out.

Lady Aviston dared not move, so fearful was she of recognition. But she saw that her boy was unhurt. Mr. Leigh still held the little fellow, regarding him with evident admiration, as he rubbed and examined his dusty hands. At length, turning to the nursery maid, he asked the name of the child. The boy laughed outright as he said: "If you were to talk English an hour to Ghita she would never understand you; but I can tell you my name. It's Dugald Aviston; and when I'm at Naples I'm an Ambassador, and a big man."

The Archdeacon started as the child spoke, and seemed to draw it closer to his bosom. Then, removing the cap which partly concealed the boy's face, he gazed eagerly upon him, with a sad and tender look that seemed to please Dugald; who in his turn met his regards with a sweet smiling face, as he said: "Are you looking at my whiskers?"

"Not exactly, my boy," Mr. Leigh replied, smiling, "but I am looking at your beautiful forehead and eyes—so like your exquisite mother."

"What, do you love Mimmy too?" The child asked. The movement with which he pressed the child so warmly to his heart, and kissed its fair forehead and cheeks, spoke volumes; Dugald seemed so to understand it, and remarked in his curious sententious manner; "A great many people love her; and I dare say, if you are good, she loves you too; you have very nice whiskers." Then, moved by

some sudden impulse, he struggled from the arms which held him; and calling to his nurse, "Ghita—*ecco! ecco!*" set off in an instant to some goats grazing in the distance.

Mr. Leigh followed him with his eyes, and looked long and wistfully; then, heaving a deep sigh, turned slowly away. Though inapprehensive of his recognizing her through the blinds, Lady Aviston felt relieved as he withdrew. The events of the morning had so subdued her, she felt that she could not have addressed him without emotion—perhaps tears. There was a terror—an agony at her heart—at the discovery of the effect these things had over her. Old feelings seemed springing up with a freshness—a vigour which appalled her, as the relative positions of herself and Mr. Leigh stood forth in all their truth; and with the renewed sensibility came a sense of degradation—almost of anger—against one who, from some dark corruption of her nature,

thus had power to move her. Again she wept bitterly and abjectly. It seemed now all that remained to her.

Unequal to the babble of Dugald, she sent her servant to the nurse to say that she was obliged to return to the city from excessive head-ache; and that, after a short half hour's play, the little boy was also to return.

Really unwell, there was comfort in the quiet of her own dressing-room, and after taking camphor-julep, her hysterical sensations left her, and she felt soothed and strengthened. There was still a panic over her at the idea of meeting the Archdeacon, and she felt that it were wise and incumbent on her to avoid it. The head-ache, which still oppressed her, she thought might serve her as a pretext for not presiding, should the party dine with them.

While considering this, Sir William entered. He had seen Lady Jane Seymour previous to calling on the Leighs, who, she told him, were to dine with her expressly for the pleasure of

meeting himself and Lady Aviston, to whom she had that instant written.

This seemed to assist Mary's previous resolves. The invitation of Lady Jane was accepted conditionally for herself, as depending on her head-ache; and Sir William left her to call upon the Leighs, to engage them for the ensuing day.

At the approach of the dinner hour, Lady Aviston declared her inability to leave her sofa; and Sir William proceeded alone to Captain Seymour's. The storm which had laid her low seemed to have spread an atmosphere of satisfaction over the feelings of Sir William. A bugbear, which, though standing far in the background of his daily life, still had had power to affright him, by a stroke of confidence and penitent confession seemed at once banished from his hearth; and he seemed to gain from his wife's gentleness and tender concern in all that he had said, a guarantee that his happiness should never again be so

threatened. Nevertheless, where a devouring love exists for one who fails to share in its excess and intensity, jealousy is not so easily routed.

Mr. Leigh did not join the dinner at Lady Jane's, owing, as Sir William learnt, to his wish of visiting an old and valued friend, who lived at a villa a few miles distant from Florence. This was all natural. Still, when in the course of dinner, Mrs. Leigh mentioned her husband's admiration of the little Dugald, whom he had met that morning at the Cascina, all assumed a new and fearful aspect. Lady Aviston had not told him of any meeting with the Archdeacon. Could it be possible that they had then arranged an interview, and the headache merely a pretext for remaining at home? The imaginations of the jealous always exceed in darkness the most depraved reality.

Hastily leaving the party after dinner, which, in fact, was about to break up, as all were

going to the Pergola, Sir William hastened to his own home. He flew at once to his wife's dressing-room, scarcely knowing what he expected to find. She was not there; but on his inquiring for her of the maid, who was sitting there at work, she put her finger to her lip, pointing to the bedroom door. He entered stealthily.

His step was so light it did not awake his wife, who lay sleeping on the bed; and he stood gazing on her tranquillity, with a feeling of ecstasy and relief. She looked so lovely too. Enveloped in a white muslin dressing-gown, which scarcely concealed the undulations of her matchless form, the effect was heightened by the crimson-satin coverlid on which she reposed. Her hair was slightly disordered; but her pale, still face had something in it of unearthly loveliness.

Unable to resist, Sir William stooped to kiss the fair hand, which almost drooped from the bed, with feelings of mingled love and thank-

fulness. The movement awoke her. She looked up, faintly smiling as she beheld him, and closed her fingers on the hand which had taken hers. It was a slight, but an expressive token; and there was a look of plaintive tenderness in her eyes, which, languid and heavy as they were, gave a transport six long years of union had failed to produce. He read in that look that his humiliation and self-unveiling had been appreciated, and that her high and noble nature had resolved his future peace.

It was thus indeed. The last few hours had been to Lady Aviston an age of emotion, terror, and conviction. It would take long in telling how each thought resolved itself into some better determination; how each throb of fear as the nature, extent, and tendency of her feelings became unveiled to her, subsided into a calm thankfulness, to think from what disastrous and evil hours she had been spared.

Deep and sincere was the sense of humiliation with which she reviewed the past—true the penitance, firm the desire, that henceforward she should be all that so devoted and sensitive a husband deserved—pure the hope that she might merit his confidence.

In the midst of the joy, which it was to Sir William thus to find her, of whom, in the disordered state of his feelings, he had formed such dreadful imaginings, there was much anxiety at finding her really unwell.

The next morning, the doctor pronounced her illness a low fever, caught from too long a drive on the Cascina, during the cold wind of the preceding morning; when a *puntura*, as the Florentine doctors describe the chill, which is often the result of the malaria at times rising on the meadows of the Cascina, must have struck her.

Of course there was no question of a dinner that day; though Lady Aviston was able to

receive Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. Leigh for a few minutes in her room. The meeting was affectionate and cordial.

Mrs. Gordon, for whose health the tour had been taken, was, as usual, chief spokeswoman, and took upon herself to describe their route; that is—repeat "Murray's Hand-book," which, by incessant study, she had got up pretty well. Mrs. Leigh, looking precisely as she had done six years back, contented herself with holding Lady Aviston's hand with her usual gentle friendliness, and ever and anon saying little kind things.

They soon withdrew; leaving Mary exhausted, but satisfied with herself and all that had passed.

And now began a life of strict observance and rigidly-fulfilled duties; and the next eight years owned a peace and calm enjoyment, which Providence usually awards to the self-forgetting—the self-purified.

Sir William twice visited England alone; at

Mary's request leaving her and her boy where, at the time, they were residing. The Calthorpes during that time, paid them several visits; and, in the three years of private life which befel the ex-minister, they ran over much of the continent. At length Sir William was named Envoy Extraordinary, and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Hague. He was the more satisfied with the appointment, that the interest which secured it, seemed to point out the fulfilment of his one diplomatic hope—that of representing the Court of St. James' at the Court of the Tuileries. He had none other ungratified. Alas! for Envoy's, and therefore human hopes! Uncourtly Death loves to cancel all such bright bills on the future; and to meet the planner, on every threshold of those fragile fabrics, which, like the pavillions constructed on a royal progress, mortals love to raise in the pathway of their lives. At the age of sixty-nine Sir William Aviston breathed his last, his head reclining on the shoulder of his

wife. His illness had not been one of suffering, but of great and sudden prostration of strength, and reached its term, before those surrounding had anticipated danger. His last sigh was a blessing of gratitude and affection on his wife.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The shade by which my life was crost,
Which makes a desert in the mind,
Has made me kindly with my kind."

TENNYSON.

AGAIN death had left Mary lone and unprotected in the world's highway; but this time with wealth equal to the most immoderate expenditure.

The estate of Belmont was among the property left to her, to revert at her death to her son; and it seemed natural to look to it as a home, surrounded as it was with those she had

known and liked in the old times. There was no one now to whom the neighbourhood of the Heathfield gravel-pits would be a cause for disquiet; and fourteen years of separation, with the advance of age, she felt, would enable her to see, as the old acquaintance merely, him, whom before she had so severely schooled her rebel nature, at one time had stood between her and all the pleasure which life had yet to offer. But she hoped all this was passed. Her's was not an age, at which to shrink from meeting one with whom no avowals—no love-making had taken place, even at the period when their relative positions had prescribed no prohibition. Since then he had been chased from her mind, with a resolution that had ensured its success and deserved its reward.

With a rooted purpose that her slightest and inmost thoughts should in nothing differ from all her manifested feelings and ideas; and that those ideas should be strictly in accordance with the wishes of the husband, of whose exceeding

merit, from the time that she had set herself stedfastly to do him justice every minute, had given her an acuter sense—the Archdeacon was to Lady Aviston nothing more than so excellent and pious a person must always be. With this lethe, which she believed had passed over all the tumult of her past feelings, she had no misgivings as to the restlessness which possessed her, until the time of the notice which she had to give to the tenant at Belmont had expired, and she was at liberty to take possession.

It was not until eighteen months after the death of Sir William, that his widow was able to take up her abode in the beautiful place his consideration for her had secured to her. The intervening time had been passed at Brighton, in strict seclusion. It was a place fertile in saddening recollections; but, even as such, she preferred it to one that struck on none of the notes of by-gone days. And, with all the depressing memories it called up, there was one ever offering a tender pleasure. It was that of

the sweet, gentle mother; who, like some heaven-sent influence, had spread such a halo of happiness around every step of her joyous youth. Her removal to Belmont still assisted that retrospect; and she thought of the time, when together they had first journeyed to a neighbourhood, which had proved so eventful to her destiny; and, even with all its regrets, that backward look seemed a dearer pleasure than the onward view of all the dull, unexciting realities which life appeared alone to offer. Well has Keble described the negative charms of middle life, in likening it to the unpoetic and cloudless summer.

"Her bowers are mute, her fountains dry,
And ever Fancy's wing
Speeds from beneath her cloudless sky,
To autumn or to spring.

"Sweet is the infant's waking smile,
And sweet the old man's rest,
But middle age by no fond wile,
No soothing charm is blest.

"Still in the world's hot restless gleam,
She plies her weary task,
While vainly for some pleasant dream,
Her wandering glances ask."

Lady Aviston had yet to learn the lore, which teaches that youth's hoard of ideal delights must be quitted with calm forbearance; —that its treasured hopes and rapturous aspirations must be suffered to pass without a murmur at the law of change, which thus leads the spirit to learn how cold and bare is the brightest dream of this life, compared to the realities of that state where all is true. She had yet to listen to that voice of mercy which whispers—"Thou shalt have joy in sadness." That calm spiritual hope shall be thine, which, like the pale radiance of the moon, brightens to purer glory, as the wild glare of busy day is seen to fade.

There was much pleasure in arranging, and dispersing among the splendid rooms of Belmont, the hoards of *belli arti* which a long

residence on the continent had collected. Still, it was but a solitary pleasure; and Lady Aviston felt it such. Her beautiful Dugald was with her, it is true, under the care of the tutor, for the time being, engaged to watch over him. But the youth, with much talent and noble feeling, still owned the aspiring pride of his infancy. His early delusion of the whiskers might have left him, but his spirit seemed to languish for other superiority. Knowledge seemed to offer it; and he applied himself to his studies with a zeal that deserved success. But this kept him much from his mother; and when with her, his talk naturally took the colour of his hopes and thoughts. Dominion over his fellow men was evidently the prevailing desire of his nature, though as yet unknown even to himself. It influenced all his actions, and peeped out in a thousand forms of petty tyranny. Poor Dugald! He was admired as a superb specimen of healthy, beautiful boyhood; he was courted as one whose notice was

difficult to obtain, and therefore prized; he was petted as one who by his means might one day return all cherishing with usury; but he was not loved. The mother watched over him with the unfailing instinct of maternity, and reaped the satisfaction of indulged instincts; but there was some dearer interest wanting. In the midst of high consideration and rich possessions, there was still a void.

Lady Aviston had found but little material change in the neighbourhood of Deirham. The Calthorpes, though much aged, pursued exactly the same routine as they had been used to do fifteen years back. The Harcourts still inhabited the Rectory; one only of the young ladies having passed into matrimony. She now flourished as a joint-stock magistrate and county member, having become the wife of Sir Henry Acton. Their love had commenced precisely when Mary's flirtation with Captain Essenden had inspired so much disdain in either bosom. It was a comfort to both to

abuse her; and a sympathy in tastes is not far from one in affection. The Dowager Lady Acton still partially superintended the affairs of the Bench and St. Stephen's. Mrs. Gordon was dead. The old Squire Tarleton had also departed, leaving his house, miserhood and poverty-stricken squirehood to the literary Regulus. He had undergone more change than most in the place. He had become the husband of poor Bertie Clive's widow; the ex-hussar having fallen a victim to Colonel Hawker and duck-hunting. A malignant scarlet fever convinced him too late, that man is not an amphibious animal. Mr. Tarleton had also changed his muse. Poetry had been dethroned; and now, as chief reviewer in one of the spiciest of periodicals, by the most crushing criticisms, was gaining the pelf and popularity which the Lady of the Pirate's Isle somehow failed in securing. The Leighs still inhabited the Parsonage at the Gravel-pits, now no longer known by that name; but standing boldly in the County Guide as

"Heathfield, a beautiful hamlet, whose church, parsonage, and school, had been built by private munificence;" and was created a perpetual curacy. The Archdeacon had long resigned the assistant Curacy of Deirham. It was now filled by a red-hot archœological, mediæval, and excellent young man from Merton; who, with learning sufficient to have overthrown a whole college of Jansenists, and elegance equal to the eclipsing all the best set-up Princes at that time paying their court to the maiden Queen, was content to be picking out the white-wash of the zigzag moulding of an arch in the old church by day—and at night equally and as zealously employed in extricating from the concrete with which time, disuse, and churchwardens had smothered them, the practices of the Anglo-Catholic Church, as it was "regulation" to call the Protestant religion.

Lady Aviston had not yet met the Leighs; but took the opportunity of Admiral and Mrs. Calthorpe staying with her, to bring about

the revival of her old intimacy with Mrs. Leigh, of whom, as Augusta Stratton, all her recollections spoke forcibly of kindness and goodness, and which were now corroborated by one note of laudation by all who spoke of her. She wrote to her, that as a chance morning call was so little likely to bring them together, she hoped that herself and the Archdeacon would meet a few mutual friends at Belmont at luncheon; and that she flattered herself the Archdeacon might find the length of the drive repaid by the inspection of some paintings and sculpture which were considered good. There was nothing artificial in this note; it was the transcript of feelings by long watchfulness and command brought into subjection. The answer from Mrs. Leigh was kind and affectionate, accepting the invitation, and expressing cordiality both for herself and the Archdeacon.

There was a slight trepidation in the nerves of Lady Aviston, as she prepared to meet her

guests on the day appointed. There was also a more careful glance at the mirror, as she left her room; perhaps a sigh, as the rich folds of her black silk dress, and the slight cap covering her beautifully formed head and still bright hair, told of time and friends and youth all passed away. However, she met all, who now assembled, with the cordial and graceful courtesy which so strictly marked her manners; and there seemed a remnant of pleasure still left to her, in thus drawing around her, those, by whom, if she had not been loved, she at least had been cherished and admired in bygone times.

She was standing in the conservatory, pointing out to Mr. Tarleton the beauty of a copy in marble of the famous Dove Tazza, constructed so as to admit of water-plants, with a contrivance at its base for the growth of choice creepers—one of which with its rich crimson blossoms wound then around the vase, contrasting exquisitely with the pure white

of the marble—when the noise of wheels attracted their attention to the drive. Lady Aviston saw a dusty, rustic-looking, little pony-chair, drawn by a pony to match, with a little fat flunkey, in keeping with the whole, stuffed into the hind seat. The carriage had passed before she could perceive who were its occupants; the bent dusty back of the gentleman who drove, being all that she had perceived.

"Who are those?" Lady Aviston enquired of Mr. Tarleton.

"Oh! that is the unmistakeable Heathfield trap," he replied; adding, "oh! if Miss Stratton had listened to my vows, the poet would have found her a better turn out than the parson; *nous nous flattons.*"

Lady Aviston thought so too; and memory took her back to the beautiful horses and the well got-up groom of the young heiress.

There was a degree of tremour at her heart, as Lady Aviston hastened to the drawing-room

to meet the new arrival. Mrs. Leigh entered first. Time had added much to the pink of her face, and to the rotundity of her little figure; but in all other respects she was the same. The neat collar, the little stiff brown ringlets still were there, under a bonnet, which, even with its irreproachable preservation, had evidently done all the Sunday work of the preceding summer. A muslin dress, probably the smart one of the same season, had got unreasonably tumbled in the pony-chair; and, having been rejuvenated with a double allowance of starch, still kept to the inelegant plaits the journey had imposed on it. She had still, however, the same simple, unaffected manner as heretofore, which placed her far above the vilifying accident of costume; and the earnest affection with which she held both Lady Aviston's hands, while she raised the little, fat, pink face, to claim the kiss of a long-delayed meeting, sent a rush of pleasure to the feelings of the former, which made

her for the moment lose the apprehension of experiencing embarrassement in her first greeting with the Archdeacon; and she in fact received him with tranquil and composed cordiality. From long and incessant habits, and a life of display, there was still this worldliness in the feelings of Lady Aviston, that appearance went far in the impressions which she received; and there was that in the outlines of the Archdeacon and his wife, so different to the courtly and fashion-studying world with which she had associated, that at the moment she felt, in fighting against his influence, she had been fighting against a phantom; and, as many had done before, had made the giant first, and then had killed him. There was a calm, therefore, in her manners she had scarcely anticipated; and, though she scarcely raised her eyes as she addressed him, she felt secure that nothing of the devastating tumult, with which his presence had been wont to affect her, could again be called up.

The entrance of the Acton trio, now claimed her attention; and, as the party was avowedly assembled to inspect the different treasures of virtu, which the taste and wealth of Sir William had collected, the Leighs passed on to greet others of their neighbourhood, and examine the splendid objects of art, which were dispersed through the rooms.

Mr. Tarleton had undertaken the office of *cicerone;* and therefore, after a time, Lady Aviston had felt herself at liberty to remain chatting, on a sofa, with Mr. Harcourt, who, too feeble to walk round the rooms, preferred the stationary view he obtained of them.

While thus conversing with the friendly old Rector, Lady Aviston became aware that the Archdeacon had approached her. She heard his well-known voice in low conversation with a gentleman, who stood near; but she avoided lifting her eyes, continuing to speak to the Rector, perhaps with a little increase of quickness in her manner, but assuredly without out-

ward appearance of emotion. It was strange, she thought, that she should feel any; and she marvelled at that power of recollection, which caused a thrill as the tones of his voice struck upon her hearing. There was nothing in the subject on which he spoke, to move her; for all she could hear, in answer to sundry questions from the gentleman with whom he was conversing, who was an experimental farmer, was some practical information respecting mangold-wortzel. The subject of their discourse reached the ear of Mr. Harcourt, who, calling out from the sofa,

"Compton, if you will give me your arm to help me into the conservatory to see these doves, I will tell you more about mangold-wortzel than the Archdeacon ever dreamt about," hobbled with quickness away.

Now to have avoided addressing the Archdeacon would have been marked, and dissonant with the tone of calm friendliness, which she so ardently desired should be established be-

tween them. Raising her eyes, therefore, she began by making some trifling remark; but encountered so troubled and anxious a glance, the words died on her lips. She could now see that time had much changed the Archdeacon. He was much paler than formerly; and his hair, which was slightly mixed with grey, was much worn from the temples; giving him still more the likeness of the saint, whose picture had first given Lady Aviston the model for manly beauty. He was perceptibly thinner, and with a graver and sadder expression than heretofore.

Disconcerted at the suspension of the composure she had hoped to maintain—a composure which the unfashioned and rustic appearance of himself and Mrs. Leigh in the pony-chair had somehow promised should not be ruffled—her thoughts sought rapidly for some reason for the trouble which she felt taking possession of her. They reverted to the last time they had met. Her mother was

then alive. The reflection seemed to account for the tears, which in spite of herself rose full in her eyes. She wished that he should so account for them; and with a voice scarcely audible, though steadier than, with her beating heart, she had hoped it would be, and with some slight disengenuousness, she said:

"The sight of you brings so strongly the remembrance of the past to me, that my past griefs come with it."

"I feared so;" he said, hurriedly, placing himself, however, on the sofa, near her. He then added, looking kindly but more calmly upon her; "but this ought not to be. Sorrow for the dead, though the most acute, is still the most bearable of the evils of this world."

There was nothing in the sentence more than the most ordinary person might have said. It was a common-place sentiment, plainly expressed; and yet the words struck on her ears with a vibration which called up long-forgotten feelings to her bosom.

"Do you indeed think them bearable?" was all that she could utter.

"Yes, assuredly;" he replied: "you know what Richter so truly says of our grief for the departed:—'This sweet sorrow for the lost, is itself but another form of consolation. When the heart is full of longing for them, it is but another mode of continuing to love them.'"

When the Archdeacon began the sentence, he had but one idea in his mind. It was that of speaking kind and consoling words to one who mourned a mother and a husband; the remembrance of whose deaths, he believed, the sight of himself had recalled to her mind, saddening and depressing it. Lady Aviston knew that he referred her agitation to that recollection; and had listened to his words with the full understanding of the spirit which had prompted them. And yet, when the concluding sentence fell from his lips, "*when the heart is full of longing for them, it is but another mode of continuing to love them,*" they seemed to speak

another sense to both; bringing, as by some magnetic power, long hidden and pent-up feelings to each other's knowledge: while in the rapid, yet deeply-speaking glance each cast at the other, there was at once an avowal of all that it was dangerous for either to know, with an affrighted conviction of the subtle and indestructable sympathy which drew them to each other. Oh, eyes! eyes! lucid, beautiful founts that ye are, in which all heaven may be reflected; still, what mysterious phantoms from the dark caverns of the heart within, rise to your surface, and rising there, betray.

With a desperate effort, the Archdeacon was the first to regain the every-day composure of a common acquaintance; and rising, he said, almost with asperity—there was such coldness and rigidity in his manner:

"Lady Aviston, you will allow me to join the picture-gazers," and left her.

And was it in this chilling, severe demeanour, that all her hopes were to end—that some day

would find her in calm friendliness mixing up with one, who, in the exalted view with which she had learnt to regard him, she had trusted would prove her declining life's pure joy—her guide to better things? The hour for which in distance she had looked, as one that must bear its full amount of happiness, had come. They had met; and, in the recognition of too close and abiding an affinity, had read their doom of separation.

And this doom was now crushing the freshly-awakened sensibilities of her heart, when the younger Lady Aston, taking the seat which the Archdeacon had vacated, now recounted to Lady Aviston a long history of her great happiness, importance, and political influence; the latter shown by her obtaining, in consideration of Sir Henry's parliamentary services, the situation of tide-waiter at Lyme for one of Joe Sims's nine sons.

At another time, the got-up recital of felicity, so strangely opposed to the general and genuine

evidence of it, would have amused Lady Aviston; now she hailed all this talk, which, only calling for a silent hearing, enabled her to recover the tranquillity, so necessary for her share of the proceedings of the day.

When luncheon was announced and the party were assembled in the sumptuous dining-room, the Archdeacon and Dugald were alone missing. In about an hour, the latter made his appearance, telling Mrs. Leigh, that, after walking with him sometime in the park, the Archdeacon had found himself so unwell that he had decided on taking the pony-chair and returning home by Deirham, where he would see Mr. Bolton and send a fly to bring her home. Mrs. Leigh, of course, experienced some anxiety, and waited nervously the arrival of the fly. It soon arrived; and she took leave of her friend with the same simple signs of affection with which she had greeted her, though evidently rejoiced in the power of rejoining the Archdeacon.

Lady Aviston had understood the whole

matter, and saw that there were other reasons, besides indisposition, for the Archdeacon's departure. It so far tutored her, that, before returning Mrs. Leigh's visit, under the plea of ensuring the finding her at home, she wrote, informing her of her intentions; thereby giving the Archdeacon the power of being absent. He so availed himself of the knowledge obtained.

With her recollection of what the Heathfield Gravel-pits had been, its new aspect had all the effect of magic upon Lady Aviston. In the position of the church, the Parsonage and its gardens running up to the heath-crowned hill, she recognized at once the realization of her own prophetical fancies on the matter, remembering Miss Stratton's manner on the occasion. Even then this oblation of an enthusiastic heart to its Creator had been contemplated! And well had it succeeded. Even thus soon, straggling and well-built cottages had succeeded the clay-built, peat-roofed huts. The picturesque allotment-ground, the useful shops, the village subscription-

brew-house—which had made bankrupt the only beer-shop keeper who had ventured within the magical circle, where nothing evil could live—the coal-yard belonging to the Parsonage—where coals were bought at the price paid for them, instead of supporting a family on the increase of cost the poor in their retail purchases are made to give—the school, the church, all rendered it a model village; and Lady Aviston, as she beheld it stretching far on either side of the sunbright slope, saw that the sacrifice of a good man and woman had been accepted at the shrine at which it had been offered.

The interior of the Parsonage still more interested and pleased her. There was a substantial yet refined simplicity in all the fitting up, which spoke so well of its occupants; while five lovely girls, hovering about, with something of that kindly instinct by which children, as well as dogs, acquire knowledge of the feelings of those who visit their parents and masters, shewed, by pretty, cordial smiles, and

familiar courtesy, their sense of Lady Aviston's friendliness. But even in the pleasure which all this was calculated to afford to her affectionate nature, there was a feeling of sadness connected with it. She could not conceal from herself that she was, as it were, excluded from it. Even in the very tenderness which Mrs. Leigh at every minute betrayed, there was something guarded—an avoidance of all that could associate them—obviously at variance with the spirit which influenced all beside. Could there be truth in what Sir William had once intimated, that, previous to his marriage, Mr. Leigh had made an admission of attachment to herself? It was strangely improbable. And yet in the manners of Mrs. Leigh, where a shade of dread rather than of jealousy was shown, there was something corroborative.

Lady Aviston left Heathfield Parsonage, with feelings painfully depressed. It is a singular feature in the melodrama of life, that, even when all the *mise en scène* suits every idea, and fulfils

every previous wish, there can still be that crumpling of the rose-leaf to nullify all other enjoyment. Lady Aviston felt, on returning to her richly decorated saloons, as the Pariah driven to his distant mat; and this solely because she found that the *entrée* of a Parsonage was in a measure debarred to her.

After this visit, Lady Aviston encountered the Archdeacon but twice during the year; and the coldness and estrangement which he at such times manifested underwent no amelioration as time passed on. Her meetings with Mrs. Leigh and her beautiful children were less frigid, and more frequent; but there was still the same evasion of intimacy; and a slight attempt at inducing her to suffer the elder girl, Eunice, to pay her a visit, was so decidedly negatived, that she forebore all further efforts to remove the invisible barrier, which seemed to interpose between herself and the inhabitants of Heathfield Parsonage.

A feeling of loneliness came over her,

rendered more confirmed by the removal of Dugald to a public school. Belmont became distasteful to her. Like the majority of the world, she shrank from hours of forced solitude; failing to let the "I" of the mind take that chance of having the full light of consciousness shed upon it. The poet tells us that: "A holy hermit is a mind alone." Yet few improve the golden opportunity of unusual loneliness, or let the "holy hermit" help to solve the one great problem, which one's own heart must offer; and which, once well studied, gives the best illustration of the truths of Revelation within our reach.

Like the spirit of the Indian is supposed to hover over the place of its earthly happiness, so Lady Aviston lingered in the haunts of her brilliant youth; and tried to forget the sensibilities of latter years, in the recollections and the old friends brought again upon the scene. But the hour for finding happiness in such things had passed. If she felt desolate

and neglected at Belmont, at Brighton she felt weariness, and a certain stepping down from the pedestal, upon which age and altered views had placed her. She was courted and still admired; for the charms of youth were succeeded by an elegance and a refinement of look and manner, which in the world will often keep head with unhelped nature. Her hand too was sought in marriage by those whose merits and position might have ensured the acceptance of their vows; but she shrunk with undissembled aversion from those *liaisons politiques;* which, those unions may be termed, where wealth, parity of a age and singleness are the only reasons for their formation.

In the eyes of the world, the happiness of Lady Aviston was now at its acme. It saw her with all that it is toiling to obtain; enjoying all which it is its hope to share. The world—the well-bred world—never looks behind the curtain; or it would have seen that this

favourite of fortune was an unhappy woman; though it might not have understood the source of her grief. What was it in fact, but a phantom of the mind;—a sickly craving for that, which Heaven, or destiny, as the world calls it, had withheld from her—a crushed and uncherished affection? Alas! its very immateriality made its bitterness; involving, as it did, omnipresence. And was there no escaping from it among the realities of life? No driving forth ideal cares by substantial ones? In short, no adopting the anxieties of others, as scarecrows to the morbid passions which vex inert humanity? The art was unknown to her. It is not among those which the world teaches its nurslings; and she had failed to discover it for herself. Extensive feelings of benevolence were not wanting in her composition, and she gave largely in charities; extravagantly, those said, who interfered in such matters. But they cost her no thought, no trouble. The ever open hand was not

the helping hand; and she delegated to others the care of finding to whom that helping hand should be extended.

Life without labour is not the life which God awards to his creatures. There is a figurative sweat of the brow, by which its enjoyments must be achieved, even where the hands have not to contend with thorns and thistles. Lady Aviston knew not this; and she pined and felt as nothing in the world, simply because as yet, she had done nothing for it, beyond trying to amuse it with the gew-gaws, which now, like a tired child, she would fain cast from her. And so time went on; and she saw each passing year fall around her like the snowy petals of the cistus. As yet no seed-pod had fallen among the flowery ruin, to spring up a plant for another world.

Dugald Aviston was already entered at Baliol; and, in his present success, and promises

for the future, there were some causes of glory for a mother's heart. The long vacations were always spent by her at Belmont, in which place he showed great interest. His enjoyment shed a faint reflection on her path; but there was in the neighbourhood of Heathfield always a preponderating gloom. In her occasional glimpses of the Leigh family, she seemed to see what would have been an interest and charm to the passing hour; and in the grateful affection, with which the kindness it was in her power to show them, was received, she read the truth and cordiality of the hearts of the mother and her girls. But still the *cordon* was kept up. She felt that it was the Archdeacon's pleasure that so it should be, and she dared not plead her encreased years—her subdued spirit—as a reason for relaxing these sanitary laws. Alas! the craving of her heart told otherwise; and she would return to Brighton and to London, and seek to find, in the con-

cussion of society, a counter-irritant o the pain of ever-watchful, yet ever-disappointed affection. There at least no hearth, no heart was closed to her.

CHAPTER IX.

"Gone is gone, and dead is dead!"

GERMAN SONG.

AND what was going on in that Parsonage, which, to the aching, wearied heart of Lady Aviston, seemed like that blessed eastward garden, watered by the four-branched river, where grew all things good?

With that seeming wantonness of purpose which sometimes marks his inscrutable course; —with that unfathomable depth of design which makes men pause and muse on his doings, when they see the good and beautiful snatched from the earth—the sinner still left to corrupt it—

Death now hovered over the roof which sheltered so much of peace and goodness.

Lady Aviston was at Belmont at the time; but the first thing she heard of it, was the arrival of the three elder daughters of the Archdeacon in a hired carriage, and who, with scared and woeful coutenances, were ushered into her morning-room. Eunice presented a note from her father. It contained merely these few lines:

"Dear Lady Aviston,

"Augusta, in her hour of agony and need, turns to your affection for assistance. The lives of our two youngest children are pronounced to be in instant danger from typhus. Our other girls have not been near them; but in our small house there is danger of infection, particularly as this morning Augusta herself feels symptoms of fever. If you have a fear of infection on your part—though Augusta tells me there need be none, their clothes having been kept wholly

separate—will you arrange something for them in some cottage near you? I am paralyzed—powerless. I cannot face the loss of these two beautiful creatures with the strength of the Christian—the man. And I turn to all things human. The trust in your affection, which has encouraged this step, has relieved us of much of our anguish.

"Yours faithfully,

"JOHN LEIGH."

The death of the two poor little angel children took place that day. It had long been foretold by the crones of Heathfield, in the sentence so often pronounced by the superstition of country people: "They were too good and too beautiful to live." Mrs. Leigh was the next victim to a malady which for ever haunts the English village; and the Archdeacon was in his turn attacked by its fearful contagion. He struggled long with it; but was at length pronounced convalescent.

After three months absence from Heathfield, he came to claim his surviving children from her who had so tenderly cherished them.

The meeting was one in which when all by a desperate effort at self-control presented calm, nay even cold aspects. The words of affection were pent up within the aching bosom, that no tender feeling should cause the outburst of grief which all felt so difficult to stifle.

Lady Aviston suffered equally with the father and the daughters. It was a strange epoch in her life, thus to be associated in the sorrows of those who had been taught to shrink from her in the bright hours of their happiness. But well she bore her part in the task of soothing; and each of the poor girls felt that in her tenderness, God had given comfort to their bereaved hearts.

At length the moment of separation drew near. The carriage was announced as being packed, and all things were in readiness. Lady

Aviston drew her breath quickly. There was a palpitation at her heart causing pain and almost suffocation.

In the midst of the horror and affliction of the last four months, there had been a balm to her feelings, long unknown to them. She had held sweet, affectionate, confiding things to her loving bosom; and this had brought back a shadow of those days, when she in her youth had clung to the mother whom she had loved, as these young creatures now loved her. The heart which had thus blossomed forth in the affection, so consonant to her tender nature, must again be checked by the torpedo chill of unaccordant society.

She stood up with a painful mastery over feelings, which, but for the power lent by long habit, could have vented itself in sobs and tears; but now calmly received the parting embraces of these young and endearing girls. They had each pressed her in their arms; and now the Archdeacon held her hands, wish-

ing, but wanting power to express his thanks. Were all, then, going—all she loved—all who loved her?

Eunice saw the pained expression of the beautiful face, she had so often watched with admiring affection. She knew, by the instinct of her own sweet heart, how that kind friend was suffering; and she knew why. She whispered a few words to the Archdeacon. He assented to their purport; and then, approaching Lady Aviston, she said modestly, and with some little timidity, for as yet the now motherless girl had never acted for herself; "Will you let me remain with you a little while longer, Lady Aviston?"

It was a proposal that, in the happiness it shed over her, Lady Aviston thought must bring a blessing to the young thing who had so timely interposed the solace of prevenance and affection.

A new era seemed dawning on the wearied existence of Lady Aviston; and the fair charities

of life promised to put forth more perfect blossoming in the autumn of her days, than they had done either in their summer or spring. The love of these beautiful girls for herself appeared to grow with their growth; and all of her character, which to the world was subject of admiration, from them called forth the more endearing mead of enthusiastic affection. She in her turn seemed worked to a recognition of pleasure—almost of gladness in the exhibition of their unsophisticated feelings; while their excessive loveliness, to eyes too long accustomed to study the outward seeming of things, lent a magic to the communion.

Of the Archdeacon, Lady Aviston saw but little. His duties in the diocese, and those immediately connected with his own ministry, left him but little leisure for home pleasures. When they met, she was struck with the change which sorrow and sickness still worked in his appearance; and to the ever present sense of sadness, left by the trials to which the husband's

and the father's heart had been submitted, she attributed much of the coldness and restraint of his manners with herself. He seemed fully to recognise the happiness which her kindness and affection had cast over the death-clouded path of his motherless girls, and facilitated in every way their meeting, even to debarring himself of the only gladness which their presence lent to his bereaved home. They felt gratefully the sacrifice his love induced, and abstained from using it too prodigally: indemnifying themselves for their moderation, by luring Lady Aviston to pass much of her time at Heathfield.

Hours passed in the sanctuary of that holy home; lessons taught by the hallowed truths and genuine faith which there became known to her, were not without a blessed influence. For the first time in her life, she learnt the true nature of God; who, by crosses or blessings, adversity or prosperity, in the stirring scenes of the world, or in the covert of seclusion,

reveals himself once in the earthly existence of every soul; though the witness had hitherto been wanting. But—"the real evidence is our own inner instinct of conviction which God has written in our hearts, illuminated and explained by the lives and characters of persons about us, and by the history of persons and nations in other times. *The power of God is visibly revealed in a true God-fearing man.* It is not an idea; it is not a dream. Ideas are passive; dreams are ineffectual. It is a living power. It is seen in the beauty of goodness which is shed over even the most illiterate and ungifted, and with those whose natural powers are larger, in the lofty obedience, in the dignity, the serenity, the high and noble energy which faith in Him makes possible, and which are impossible without Him."

Was this conviction—this spirit of good less powerful that it came through him who had exercised so strange a control over her? No. Even while her soul had learnt to look up to

an invisible friend and father in heaven, it connected with the earnest faith and newly awakened hopes of the Christian, thoughts of the "God-fearing man" who had brought them to her. Was there evil in this? Among the questions by which she had sought further knowledge in the new but simple science now spread before her, this inquiry could not be introduced. It was her own heart, therefore, which answered it. That told her, that the high and reverential love, which a woman feels to him who realises to his best the purpose of his God-worshipping—God-glorifying existence; a love unmixed by the debasing passions of earth and interfering with no fellow-creature's happiness, is one which angels share and God approves. And so she hugged the vivifying essence to her heart; which, forgetting its long-crushed hopes—its life-weary aspirations, and the weight of years which now might have warranted its chill, warmed to the happier influence.

Lady Aviston had always felt that to the good and beautiful Eunice much of her present peace was owing. She had clung to her at a moment when her sense of her solitary position was most acute: and thus had so excited her gratitude and affection, that her dearest hope was one day to evince it. The opportunity promised soon to present itself.

Dugald Aviston, at his visits to Belmont, which his mother now rarely quitted, soon betrayed a preference for Eunice above her sisters. An assimilation of tastes was the first attraction which drew them to each other. The Tractarian Curate of Deirham had made Eunice most learned in all the pretty playthings of the *clique*. She planned encaustic tiles and altar palls. She sketched with an architect's precision, fonts and standard ends; and withal, chanted Gregorian tones with a sweetness and fulness of melody that enchanted Dugald, who had just entered with all the impetuosity of twenty into the enticing study of revivals,

which, connected as it was with ecclesiology, and therefore, as he believed, with religion—though the relation was not imperative—it assumed importance in the mind of one, whose prevailing virtue was service to God—whose abiding passion, the mastery over men.

The Archdeacon was the first to mention to Lady Aviston his belief of the attachment springing up between their children. She told him, smilingly, that she had done her utmost to forward it; and that it would be in her power to make over that portion of her fortune to her son, which would enable to him marry on his coming of age, if Eunice accepted him. She entreated the Archdeacon to take no immediate notice of all this, until her return from London, whither she was going immediately, to secure the independence of Dugald; Sir William having left her undivided possession of his large property.

The Archdeacon had nothing to urge against her plans. The attentions of Dugald were suf-

ficiently general to excuse blindness; and the high character and attainments of the young man gave him a sufficient claim to his consideration, independently of his relation to Lady Aviston.

On the morning before her departure for town, Lady Aviston and her son drove over to Heathfield to say adieu. Their visit was nearly concluded; when Dugald asked Eunice and her sisters to accompany him into the Church, which opened into the garden, to try some ancient service for the even-song on the organ. Lady Aviston declined joining them, seating herself at the open window; and took up a newspaper, in order not to disturb the Archdeacon, who for some time had been busily engaged in a huge folio in a distant corner of the apartment, from which he was busily taking notes, so that he scarcely seemed to be aware that they were alone.

There was a soothing influence in the soft swelling notes of the organ; the sweet odour of

the flower-garden, and the subdued light entering from windows shaded by flowering and fragrant creepers, that lent an enchantment to the moment. Lady Aviston forgot to read, and gazed out on a lawn as smooth as that at Belmont—on flowers as brilliant; and the nothingness of wealth which had so oft of late occurred to her, struck her still more forcibly. She turned to look at the interior of the apartment. There was elegance in all the arrangements of the simple furniture, and education and intellect in all the ornaments, sparingly and judiciously spread about. What could the most sumptuous rooms show more? Merely money. The answer, as it occurred, gave her pain. She thought of the marriage which Sir William had contracted for the sake of wealth. She thought of her own with him. Both had brought love-crossed hearts to the altar of fortune. They were unworthy offerings at an unworthy shrine.

A sigh escaped her. It was echoed; and she

found the Archdeacon's eyes withdrawn from his book, and rivetted intently on herself.

There was at once tenderness and earnestness in his gaze; there might be admiration; for by all her elegance and exquisite taste in dress, which was second nature, there was attraction lent to her delicate features and graceful form. Her eyes still looked out from their shaded lids, with but little of their dark radiance abated.

The look of the Archdeacon ruffled a well of deep and long-slumbering feeling; and she felt her eyes flash, in the moment of emotion, as she met his glance. She passed her hands over them; almost fearing that the gleaming, she could not temper, might be construed into anger, as she said:

"I could almost fancy I saw the Curate of Deirham, and not the grave Archdeacon."

"If you could look a little deeper, Lady Aviston," he replied, drawing near her, "you might see the poor Curate's heart even now

beating in an old man's bosom." He spoke sadly, but with a tone and look of ardent feeling, which sent all the blood with a hurried rush through her veins. She could not reply. It was impossible to take his words playfully, and so respond to them; neither could the allusion to his age, which so tacitly referred to her own, prevent them carrying an impetuous stream of recollections through her mind. Here was a virtual avowal of early affection; an avowal which, in times past, would have been a crowning blessing to a gay and gladsome life. But that failing—long years of up-torn feelings and an unanswered heart had been her lot. The idea, as it struck her, swelled her bosom with a slight resentment; and the tongue, which thoughts of love had rendered mute, now found power under a sense of injury. She removed her hand from her eyes, which glistened reproachfully, as she said:

"You ought not to speak thus. If your words are true, they are admitting what ought

to have been told long, long ago. But you then kept silence—you must keep silence now. Oh! it would be cruel to raise the cloud of bitterness and regret, which your words almost conjure up."

The excitement of Lady Aviston seemed to gather force as her feelings found utterance; for, after a moment's pause, clasping her hands together with a vehemence which threatened to fracture their frail kid covering, she said, angrily, but quickly:

"Mr. Leigh—my life has been a prosperous one, but not a happy one. Heaven knows that I have been thankful for the prosperity given me—and patient under the absence of that happiness it has denied me. I am still grateful—I would still be patient. But your words call for the confession—the accusation—or whatever you like to call it, that it is to you I alone attribute that blight—that withering—which has made my past life drag on so drearily."

The Archdeacon showed no surprise at her words, though a slight flush passed over his face. And he seemed perplexed and irresolute, as he said, hesitatingly:

"You confess, what my own feelings have taught me to understand. I, too, know that blight—that withering. I, too, in a measure re-echo your accusation. It is indeed to you I have owed that weariness of spirit, which an interrupted affection involves. It was your levity—your errors which severed us. Doubtless it has been for good. I have never dared to question that."

The Archdeacon spoke slowly, almost sternly. Yet there was a tremour in his voice—a kindness in his eye, which seemed to belie the severity of his words. However, to Lady Aviston they offered no palliating influence. Angry surprise seemed to take possession of her heart; and, with resentful expression, she asked:

"Of what have you dared to suspect me?"

"Not suspect—not suspect, Lady Aviston," the Archdeacon said sorrowfully. "My thoughts could harbour nothing so dark—nothing so base as suspicion, where you were concerned. Alas! your fearless nature—your proud ingenuousness never sought to conceal the dangerous levity which undid us. But do not let us speak more on the subject," he added hurriedly. "I cannot be calm. I fear even now its influence. And yet you should know all—to exonerate me from what may have appeared inconsistent—unworthy. It may pain you—but it ought to be. I have diaries of the years of my single life. I will find a page which may explain all. It brings up old ghosts," he said, trying to smile—for he saw an expression of alarm in Lady Aviston's countenance; "but that all exorcists do, before laying them."

Lady Aviston forbore answering. She saw the canticle amateurs coming from the church, and she felt that she must now wait for the



elucidation of all this perplexity; a perplexity, which almost rendered nugatory the impression, which the tenderness betrayed by the Archdeacon would have tendered to her still loving —though well-schooled heart.

CHAPTER X.

"It was appointed that repentance should be accepted instead of innocence, and final punishment be awarded only to the impenitent and obdurate offender."
—SUMNER.

It was not until two days after her arrival in London, that Lady Aviston received any communication from the Archdeacon. She had already given instructions to the lawyers to vest in the hands of trustees, whom she named, a sum equal to producing an income of £2,000 a-year to her son; while, in the hands of the same gentlemen was also to be

placed, for the sole and separate use of Eunice Leigh, funds to half the amount of that given to Dugald. It was an act which she believed would render their marriage happier, thus rendering their worldly possessions more equal. She had still reserved for herself the enjoyment of an income ample for the most prodigal expenditure, and therefore quite equal to the simple life she hoped henceforth to lead at Belmont.

It was with some emotion she broke the seal of the Archdeacon's letter, and read as follows:

"Heathfield, June 1st.

"Dear Lady Aviston,

"I have found the page of my Diary; but I revoke my promise of sending it to you. It was written at a moment of irritation and painful excitement; and would hurt, perhaps offend you, while there is no adequate reason for the infliction. Yet, as I owe it to myself that you should be acquainted with its substance—per-

haps I owe it you—I will endeavour to impart it without one wounding expression.

"You must recollect the Waterloo *fête* at Admiral Calthorpe's. Fatally influenced by your strange and openly-avowed preference on that night—for which all your previous unguarded partiality had in a measure laid the train—Captain Essenden, in a moment when frantic by my slight interference, the contending force of a passionate love, and the throes of conscience, disclosed to me this determination:—to induce you to adopt that line of conduct, which, though breaking through all the laws that men conceive holy, by giving you to each other might enable you, in some distant land to live together a life of love, which might bear witness by its purity and refinement that love not vice, had led you to the unhallowed step.

"This mad, this wretched sophistry was contested by me with a heat—a violence that called up the belief, that love for yourself, and not horror—agony—at this disclosure, led to

the pleadings—the denunciations which fell from me. I knew you not then but as one, who, without one previous thought of impurity, might still fall before the force of so much passion—of love that could sacrifice everything for your sake. I trembled lest you should be submitted to the perilous trial. The recollection of the fierce contentions of that night even now troubles me. By the power of threats—of soothing—of the most abject supplication, I induced the distracted man to give me a sacred promise that he would not see you for three months. It was a temporizing measure, which, I argued, would enable better feelings to assert their dominion. I was right. He awoke to reason; but, I believe, never lost the sense of an abiding love;—but it is long since I have heard of him. The promise, nay, the oath—for in the excitement of the moment, I dared to exact one—was given; but only on the condition that I would make one similar—to the purport that neither then nor ever, should

I attempt to benefit by this renunciation on his part, by seeking to unite myself with you.

"The propriety of binding myself by a vow, alone caused hesitation. For, though at the moment my whole being was filled by the most bewildering passion for yourself, the oath that would abjure it, could scarcely be more stringent than my daily struggle against it. I must be very brief; I feel that I am on dangerous ground.

"Prepossessed with an idea that your every fascination was a wile—your sweet and endearing attractions were the cold calculations of coquetry, I still suffered myself to be fettered by them. I believed it was sin,—nay, it was sin; for it was against the struggles of a better purpose that it still was dominant.

"Our acquaintance had began with the impression that, if not indifferent, you disliked me. Poor Mrs. Gordon, with her kind, yet strange confusion of purpose, even while combatting this idea which she herself set up, confirmed

it, by betraying many girlish and light-hearted strictures on my costume and manners. It was strange that in this I fancied I saw my safety; and, under this delusion, dared to gaze on loveliness which might have fascinated a less earth-bound spirit than my own. I mention the belief I had of your indifference, to explain, that everything tending to upset it was understood as a part of the system by which all men were to be brought to your feet. Your attentions to Captain Essenden were thus construed—their continuance to a tenderer feeling. You were wrong; I must not conceal it from you—you were deeply to be censured. Nothing of the custom of society, nothing of its permitted levities should have hid from you the truth, that you were interposing yourself between the soul of a fellow-creature and Heaven. I must add, that my good Augusta always looked with indulgence on the thoughtlessness which a country neighbourhood was disposed to judge harshly. She also suspected, and

questioned me on my feelings for you. I told her briefly, that, whatever their nature, they must be uprooted; that the indulgence of them was an infringement of the rule which I had deliberately laid down for my future life; that the whole aim of my existence would be subverted by them, my strength and usefulness fettered. I thought so then, writhing, as I was, under my doubt of your sentiments towards Essenden. I moreover informed Augusta, that an irremediable bar had been put to every sentiment of a tender nature from myself to you. I found afterwards that she construed my words as admitting that I had been rejected by you. It was a belief that interfered less with her happiness than any other. I had not designed its existence; but I took no pains to remove it.

"The sacrifice of her worldly wealth to the welfare of the community, over which she watched so faithfully, was completed before a word relative to our union had been uttered.

It is singular that your words first gave rise to the idea. You spoke of an attachment between us, as an affair known. It opened a world of elucidation to what the timidity of Augusta might have hid for ever. It seemed to promise more perfect resistance of fascinations, becoming day by day more dangerous. My marriage followed. I repine at nothing that has passed. In the short, but happy life of Augusta, she had the assurance that God had remembered her for good, for all she had done in His service. It is He who has further blessed her, in giving such a friend as yourself to her dear and orphaned Eunice. May Heaven bless you, dearest friend! This is not like an old man's letter.

"J. L."

What a wave of guilt and misery seemed to roll over the soul of the unhappy Lady Aviston, as she finished the Archdeacon's letter! All that she had undergone for so many years

was, then, the just penalty—the natural blossoms of the evil seeds which she had sown!—all those sad hours of craving—unrequited affection, the work of her own hands!

And she had been the cause of suffering, of guilt, in others! The thought sent an arrow to her breast. It was too acute for endurance. With a shriek she called for assistance, and was heard from the room adjoining. The power of rising to the bell was beyond her.

And then all the busy work of a sudden illness was enacted. Doctors were sent for, and blisters and leeches applied to the heart, as if its throbs of agony could be stilled by any art, short of that which could extract the poisoned dart which rankled there. She lay self-convicted of sin—sin, beyond the power of any act of her own to redeem. The groan and the shudder told those who watched that the pain was as yet unquelled. Could it be lost, when the recollection of the outraged unison of

wedded love, outraged by herself—the indulged and cherished friend, passed over her? It was, then, she who had caused the banishment from a happy home, at which all had wondered—herself the most! And she had dared to feel resentment at the forgetfulness, which she had believed had caused the neglect of her and her letters! Oh! blind folly—blind wickedness!

Eunice and the Archdeacon came to London; and her affectionate care and his holy words did more to soothe the self-condemned sufferer than aught beside. They remained with her some days; and soon, when they had again left her, letters from herself proclaimed to those who loved her so dearly, that she was every day amending, and hoped soon to be at Belmont.

In two months she rejoined them, altered, weakened, but comparatively happy. The conviction of the evil she had committed would have found no alleviation in the days of her pride, when, with self-gratulation, she had felt that she was not as others were; but now,

with an eye opened to that inward disease of the soul, which breaks forth either in the open leprosy of sin, or under the not less loathsome aspect of folly, she had learnt to look from whence to seek restoration. Now on bended knees she could thank the Father of spirits, who had willed that, even in a life marked by the absence of all religious considerations, marked by the levity of conduct, the folly of heart to which such must lead, she had yet been defended from gradual submission to the deeper sins which can debase and degrade humanity. Had the immunity been owing to herself? She felt not; and in the praise which her heart rendered to Him who had saved, was the spontaneous, hopeful prayer that He would forgive.

Amidst the retrospective glances she cast on her past life, Lady Aviston could see that its evil tendency had taken its spring at an early period. She did not visit this on her mother. Transplanted from natural scenes, and natural habits, well had that mother trimmed her

own fragile bark through the strange seas in which Providence had placed her. In the actual relations as wife and mother, well had she fulfilled the duties which her natural perceptions recognized. But in the cares of maternity the world had interfered. She was furnished with no experience, no helm to bear up against its force; and she had, therefore, drifted with those around, who might be supposed by their position to hold the charts for the navigation. Could she suppose that the important matter of educating the fair, and well-born daughters of England, could be conducted by anything less than approved system?

It was to this system that Lady Aviston now looked back with a sense of degradation. By it, a young woman with personal attractions, and all the tendencies of her nature unchecked, was launched into a gay world, without one principle of action to preserve herself or others from all the evil she might incur or effect. How faulty, then, the system which did not

better prepare for the freedom which it permitted! How dangerous the liberty, for which the strictness of the education did not furnish precaution and stability—a liberty, in which the escape from harm resolved itself into the immunity of Marmontel's Marchioness—"by good luck!"

The first visit that the Archdeacon and his daughter paid to Belmont was short. They found Lady Aviston languid, and still suffering a little from pain in the side; but she seemed to awaken to so much gladness and animation while they were with her, that all anxiety on her account was removed.

As yet Lady Aviston had not made known her munificence to Eunice. Dugald had learnt of the independence secured to him by his mother; and had rendered all the gratitude and affection of which his noble and euthusiastic mind was susceptible. He was to rejoin her in a week; and Lady Aviston's wish was, that, finding his effectual means, he would ask the

hand of Eunice, as the portionless daughter of the Archdeacon; and then, on her acceptance, learn that her fortune was equal to half his own. It was a romantic idea; but it was one which yielded her great happiness.

On their taking leave, Lady Aviston petitioned the Archdeacon, that Eunice might come the next day, to remain a few weeks with her. He could have refused her nothing, so touching was the gentleness and the affection of her manner; but he had duties which called him the next day exactly in an opposite direction, while Eunice had also some little parish matters to transact then at Heathfield; it was therefore arranged, that on the following day, he should bring her to Belmont.

The next day Lady Aviston had dined at the usual early hour, which, as an invalid, she had adopted; and, after one of those happy dozes, by which the languid cheat the hours of solitude and inaction, was gazing in admiration on the slanting rays of the autumnal sun, which

lighted up all the park, that, with its sloping lawns and shrub-crested hills, as seen from her couch, lay like a fair picture open to her view; when the noise of carriage-wheels sounded from beneath her window. For a moment she believed that it might be Dugald, arriving earlier than she had looked for him, as it was past the hour when morning visitors might be expected; but, to her surprise, the Archdeacon was announced.

At first, she feared that this unexpected visit was to announce some misfortune; but the Archdeacon's calm look and tranquil address re-assured her. After some minutes, she asked him why he was come, when he had told her it would be impossible.

"I could not stay away," he said, slightly colouring; "and as I finished my business quickly at Parkham, I thought of some other to bring me nearer to you. It is a pleasure which pays me for my day's double work."

He kissed the hand, which a movement of

glad and gratified feeling put forth; and thought he had never seen her look more lovely, as a flush rose on her pale face, which seemed to light up, with a new and more tender radiance, the dark eyes, over whose beauty time had as yet shown no destroying power.

There was a joy given by the words of the Archdeacon, that, amid all the festal scenes of her past life, she had but rarely tasted; and it called up her spirit from sad and depressing thoughts. For the last two months death had been much in her mind. She knew that, in the peculiar attack she had experienced, her life had been in jeopardy; nay, her physician had disclosed as much; and death had really been the business of the day. She had looked for it at every quickening of her pulse, and watched, as it were, its approach, as her short slumbers had stolen over her. The awakening again to life had surprised her, and that a

sinking so like death, should so effectually struggle with it. Still it came not. The faintings, the palpitations had again and again to be endured; and still they yielded to ether, sal volatile, and all the restoratives prescribed. Each day seemed snatched, as it were, from the grasp of a victor, who thus dallied with his prey. Lady Aviston had not turned with an affrighted soul from death; still, that departure, which in health may sometimes be looked on complacently as a repose from sorrow, in sickness could not be regarded with such composure; and she had yearned for a prolonged life.

A long silence had followed the words of the Archdeacon. Lady Aviston felt her heart beating; and existence at this moment seemed so sweet, she feared the exquisite emotions might at once bid it cease. She spoke not, therefore, that words might not further agitate her; but at length, after the lapse of some minutes,

again placing her hand in his, she told softly the fear that kept her silent. He pressed it firmly, as he said, with sad emphasis:

"You must not speak of such mournful things to me. I am unable to bear them. I cannot lose you, my own loved one." Bending low over the hand he still held, and whose delicate fingers glowed in the tender clasp, he whispered with low, yet distinct utterance: "Mary, I cannot live without you; I must see Essenden."

A flood of tears gushed from the eyes of Lady Aviston. They seemed like an enchantment to relieve her throbbing bosom. Still she could not speak. A new sense of felicity seemed springing forth, and she dreaded to dispel it; and like the sleeper, who, when half-awakening, tries to continue some blissful dream, so she clung to the blessed perception fast stealing over her, that he who had so long been her one sweet thought — her one sad longing, passionately loved her. A thrill passed over her, as in a low, broken tone, she said:

"I may die to-night; but now I know that you have loved me."

The Archdeacon bent over her, and pressed his lips fervently on her pale forehead. As he raised again his head, she smiled sadly as she beheld the troubled and sorrowing expression of his countenance, whispering—"Do not grieve—I may get well;" and reclined passively against the arm he had passed around her. Did he feel that that sweet face had lost any of the sweet beauty which in past years had first struck upon his earth-led senses? Did he feel that the form which his arms encircled had lost the fair symmetry of her youth? Did she too see aught of change? No. Love lent to that moment its most powerful delusion; and all the broken hopes of her fond heart seemed atoned for.

She had raised herself from her pillow and leant towards him, his arm still encircling her; and with cheek pressed to cheek, as he held her to him, low murmuring, whispered love-words passed between them. There was

bliss—but oh! how much of grief. That moment had unveiled to them, how much of happiness their own hands had put from them. She, like the first erring woman, saw with bitter, unavailing remorse, how fair the Paradise from which her fatal weakness had banished her. He, like the God-sealed unblaming Adam, looked back too on a lost Eden; and felt what deep mystery is wrapped up in that love of man and woman which thus sways to weal or woe. But he was spared one pang which had so gnawed at her heart, since it had become known to her. It had not been his hand which had cast all this cup of happiness from them—not his sin. He had made a vow, it is true; had taken a solemn obligation, and one that nothing sacred had called for. So far he had erred. But he had acted with the purest motives and most zealous charity; and the fulfilment of his promise had been as much a point of honour, as anything in the worldly acceptation of the term could be. He felt too that there was still more

involved in the sanctity with which it was kept. The faith of a light-thinking man in the truth of a professing Christian depended on it. Its evasion would have detracted from the strength of a religion whose mandates he had been so anxious to enforce. He believed that his interference had saved from destruction, two, whom he had really loved; and he had never allowed one thought of self to intervene. But, as if years of patient endurance, and long pent up feelings had not been sufficient for his proving, now came gushing forth well-springs of tenderness he had scarcely known his heart had held; chords of angel harmonics seemed struck, that till now had never sounded; and his tears—large, frequent, woman's tears,—now mingled with hers, who for that brief moment held full empire over his whole being. No more intense worship of a woman had ever moved the heart, the soul of man before. It did not displace the ever-presiding sense of Divinity, but it mingled with it; and, as he held the earthly idol to

his bosom, he felt that it was a permitted ecstasy.

It seemed to him as the beginning of a solemn bridal; chaste, passionate, and showing for one brief minute that Heaven had provided exquisite, demarcated bliss for its creature even on this earth; and then to evaporate to heaven. Alas! too soon. The head falling heavily on his shoulder told him that one more powerful than love had claimed its victim. Lady Aviston was dead.

* * * * * *

The Archdeacon still walks this earth. People see his sad and mournful countenance, his spare form, and talk about the austerities of religion. They little dream that it is that which has alone given him patience through all his trials; telling him that his work is yet unfinished, and that this world—the seed-field of immortality—yet calls for his labours. Two of his daughters are married. Eunice is still the companion of her father, sorrowful but

not despairing. A blight has come over her young love; and he who called it into life has left her. Not for an earthly rival, but for a phrensy—a mania—a—ah! we must not give it a name. Time will solve an enigma, which with dark mystery now hovers over many a troubled hearth. Dugald Aviston has forsaken the religion of his forefathers; and now ranges in that church, of which, Mr. Tarleton suggests, the charm to him, is the dominion it affords over his fellow-men. Be that as it may, Dugald has received the tonsure; Belmont is converted into a Roman Catholic establishment; and all his available funds given over to a Church, which, for good or evil, still extends its grasp.

The Tractarian Curate, Wynton, whose religious scruples were such, that he once did penance for having too greatly relished buttered toast; and yet permitted himself to dwell with rapture on all the gorgeous beauty of a Pimlico chapel;—thus making a distinction between poor, vulgar



human nature's love for toast, and "the lust of the eye" which rejoices in all the blue and gold of modern ecclesiology,—has succeeded to valuable Church preferment; and it is supposed, with modified views, he may finally succeed his friend Aviston in the affections of the Archdeacon's daughter. The father dreads the separation; it is thus another fabric of happiness will fall, still further recalling to his mind, that truth, that "this earth is not the building ground of humanity, only the spot where it is fitted and fashioned."

THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street











